

THE DECALOGUE  
IN THE  
CATECHETICAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Is the Decalogue an adequate basis  
for the ethical teaching of the Church?

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## A b b r e v i a t i o n s

AJTh	American Journal of Theology
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch. Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk, ed. V. Herntrich und A. Weiser
BA	The Biblical Archaeologist
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, hsg. von Martin Noth, Neukirchen
CR	Corpus Reformatorum
EMM	Evangelisches Missionsmagazin
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
HThR	Harvard Theological Review
KD	Karl Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik
LVT	Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros, ed. L. Köhler und W. Baumgartner
NAM	Neue Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Neues Göttinger Bibelwerk, hsg. von Paul Althaus
NThT	Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift
NTS	New Testament Studies
Rb	Revue biblique
RE	Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 3. Aufl. 1896-1913
RGG	Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RK	Reformierte Kirchenzeitung
SJTh	Scottish Journal of Theology
S.Th.	Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica
Str.-B.	Strack-Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch
ThBl	Theologische Blätter
ThEx	Theologische Existenz heute
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThR	Theologische Rundschau
ThSt	Theologische Studien
ThStKr	Theologische Studien und Kritiken
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift (Basel)
WA	M. Luther, Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausg.) 1883 ff.
WNT	W. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZpTh	Zeitschrift für praktische Theologie
ZsystTh	Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible and the New English Bible (New Testament) have been used for the Scripture passages.

## P r e f a c e

The theme of the present thesis has arisen from a missionary situation. It is very likely that the question of the use made of the Decalogue in our catechetical-ethical teaching would not have demanded attention with a similar urgency in the realm of the "Older Churches". In the confrontation with non-Christian religions and their ethics, however, we found ourselves faced with the questions: Is the Decalogue really the summary and embodiment of God's will for the shaping of Christian life? In how far do Christian ethics differ from pagan ethics? These questions inevitably led to an investigation of the New Testament evidence concerning our knowledge of God's will and the peculiarity of approach to Christian ethics.

It was not intended at first to make an extensive study of the use made of the Decalogue for catechetical instruction in Church History. The main concern - as indicated by the subtitle of our thesis - lies in the systematic side of the problem. Nevertheless, a historical treatment of the question proved necessary for two reasons. The fact that the Decalogue was not used as a catechetical means until the 13th century seemed to be widely unknown. This matter is of course dealt with in the books concerned with the historical development of catechetical instruction, but it is seldom related to our present practice. So it was very useful for our purpose to collect the evidence from various sources and to place it in the framework of the present thesis.

The second reason for going into Church History is of greater importance. It appears that the position of the Decalogue in the Churches of our days can only be understood properly against the background of historical development, e.g. the association of this Code with the idea of 'natural law' and the practice of auricular confession. To question the present position of the Decalogue thus meant to investigate the ideas connected with the Ten Commandments, and, above all, the



place and significance attributed to them in the Catechisms of the Reformation.

It is self-evident that such an extensive approach could only be made at the expense of thorough investigation of direct sources. The writer is fully aware of this fact, and it has often been a great temptation to make a more detailed study of some question of exegesis or theology, or to remain longer at a certain period of Church History. But the limited time as well as the usual size of a thesis forbade such special research, if the aim, i.e. the answering of the question about the adequacy of the Decalogue for catechetical teaching, was to be reached. As a matter of fact a great number of special studies dealing with certain aspects of our problem could be used as bases for the more comprehensive and systematic treatment of the present issue. It often happens that results gained by a thorough investigation in a limited field of theology or in Church History fail to bear upon the life of the Church, because they are not related to the whole of Christian doctrine and practice; this fact may be the justification for the approach chosen for the present treatment of our subject.

I would like to thank the committee of the Basel Mission which conceded me a prolonged furlough to allow me to undertake this study. I am indebted to my academic advisers, the Rev. Professor T.F. Torrance and the Rev. Professor J. McIntyre for their advice and criticism, and to the Rev. Prof. N.W. Porteous, the Rev. Prof. W. Bieder, the Rev. Dr. Ian A. Moir, and the Rev. R.A.S. Barbour for their valuable suggestions. Many thanks are due also to Miss A.J.G. Hewat and several other Scottish friends who were so kind as to read and correct the drafts in order to make my English more intelligible. Finally I want to express my thanks to the Staff of the Library of New College, Edinburgh, as well as to the Staff of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, for their untiring readiness in providing the necessary literature.

Edinburgh, June 1962.

H.R.



## Part One

Introduction: THE DECALOGUE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IN JUDAISM

Chapter 1: The Decalogue in recent Old Testament research.

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### § 1. Age and origin of the Decalogue.

In the recent decades the question of the age and origin of the Decalogue has found very divergent answers among Old Testament scholars. Wellhausen and his followers considered the authorship of Moses as impossible and dated the Decalogue very late, because they thought it dependent on the prophetic message. Only very few scholars at that time maintained that the Decalogue was of great age. Their number however considerably increased after Hugo Gressmann in his book about Moses (1913) refuted most of the arguments that had been used to prove the late composition of the Decalogue.

In the year 1929 Ludwig Köhler<sup>1</sup> gives a summary of the Decalogue-research and comes to the conclusion that the Decalogue in Ex. 20 in its present form originates from the time of the Exile or even after the Exile, whereas the form which is preserved in Dt. 5 has its origin in the 7th century B.C. According to Köhler it is possible to detect by means of critical reflection a much older Decalogue based on these two traditions. The original form thus obtained does not contain anything that speaks against its composition in the time of Moses.

After 1930<sup>2</sup> most of the scholars recognise the great age of the Decalogue. They diverge however on the question whether it was composed by Moses himself or not. From among the numerous studies which have contributed to a better understanding of our problem we shall summarize some which are of special importance. These are fundamental for all further study in the realm of Decalogue research.

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1) Ludwig Köhler, Der Dekalog, Th.R. 1929 p. 161-184

2) see J.J. Stamm, Dreissig Jahre Dekalogforschung, Th.R. 27.Jg. 1961  
H. 3 + 4

In his book "Le décalogue"<sup>1</sup> Mowinckel comes to the conclusion that the origin of the Decalogue is to be found in the worship of Israel, i.e. in the feast of New Year and of the Accession to the Throne<sup>2</sup>. In his opinion, the accounts of the events at Mount Sinai are nothing else but the description of the above mentioned feast, translated into the language of the historical myth. Originally the Decalogues (there existed different forms) were used as rules of the sanctuaries and as codes of conditions for the entrance, later on they were given a definite place in the ritual of the feast and served as basis for the renewal of the Covenant. Instances for such liturgies of entrance are found in Ps. 15 and 24, whereas the use of the law within the liturgy of the feast is evident in Ps. 81 and 50. In Dt. 31,10-13 we are told about a regularly repeated feast with the reading of the Law. According to Mowinckel, this feast was originally celebrated every year with the reading of a shorter law (not of the whole book of Deuteronomy, as is supposed in the above stated passage).

Since Mowinckel, the close connexion between worship and the Decalogue is generally admitted, though several of his postulates are more or less contested by Old Testament scholars, e.g. the existence of a Feast of Accession to the Throne, the original concurrence of the Decalogue with the liturgy of the Entrance, and the origin of the account of the Sinai-events from worship.

The second treatise we want to mention is by Albrecht Alt, "Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts" (1934).<sup>3</sup> Alt distinguishes in the Israelite literature of the Law two types, i.e. the casuistic and the apodictic formulated law. The casuistic formulated maxims of the law are introduced by the conjunction "if" and are scattered through the whole Pentateuch. Compact bodies of such precepts are found especially in

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1) Sigmund Mowinckel, Le Décalogue, Paris, 1927.

2) Mowinckel was led to the supposition of such a feast in his earlier edited Studies on the Psalms.

3) in: Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel I, München 1953 p. 278-332

the so-called "Book of the Covenant"<sup>1</sup> and in the "Law of Holiness"<sup>2</sup>. According to Alt, this casuistical formulated law is common property of the people of Canaan, especially in its form, but partly also in its content. It is the style of the documents of law in the ancient Orient. Religion and morals are separated. This kind of law refers to the cases which are dealt with by the local jurisdiction, consisting of lay people. The apodictic formulated law has quite a different style. The case and the judgment are compressed into a few words in a single sentence. Here, religion, morals and civil law are not divided. Everything is related direct to the will of Jahwe without motivation or conditions. The collections of apodictic law that are most evident are the Decalogue and the series of twelve accursed crimes quoted in Dt. 27.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the casuistical formulated law, the apodictic formulated law, according to Alt, has its origin within the boundaries of Israel. This opinion, however, has been seriously questioned in recent times (see below). Alt concludes: "As the worship of Jahwe, which is in indissoluble connexion with the apodictic law, has its origin obviously in the desert, we have to reckon with the same origin for the pattern of the apodictic law, though this does not apply to the forms which have been preserved"<sup>4</sup>. This scholar is also convinced that the Decalogue had its place in the liturgy of a feast, namely the Feast of Tabernacles. This conclusion is derived especially from Dt. 31,10 and Ps. 81, which Psalm is composed for the Feast of Tabernacles and seems to quote the first sentence of the Decalogue.

Gerhard von Rad, who in his treatise "Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch"<sup>5</sup> (1938) makes full use of the findings by Mowinckel and

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1) Ex. 20,22 - 23,19

2) Lev. 17,26

3) Similar codes are found in Ex. 21,12.15-17; Lev. 19,13-18

4) Alt, op.cit. p. 330

5) in: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament, München 1958, p. 9-86

Alt, reaches some further conclusions<sup>1</sup>. He includes the Covenant of Shechem in his research, compares this account with the composition of the Sinai-events and the disposition of Deuteronomy and deduces from these texts the liturgical form that has been used for the Feast of Renewal of the Covenant at Shechem. In this festal liturgy the proclamation of the Law (= Decalogue?<sup>2</sup>) stood in the centre.

George E. Mendenhall<sup>3</sup> and W. Beyerlin<sup>4</sup> have compared the Decalogue with Hittite vassal-treaties of the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. and found striking similarities in disposition as well as content between these treaties and the Decalogue. Alt's tenet that the apodictic formulated law is not found outside Israel seems to be disproved by the facts<sup>5</sup>. Without going into details we shall mention several points of the Hittite vassal-treaties which reveal close parallels to the Decalogue and thus shed new light on our question<sup>6</sup>:

1. The Hittite treaties open with a formula of self-introduction, in which the lord and author of the covenant makes himself known to the vassal who is granted the treaty.
2. There follows a historical prologue in which the author of the covenant mentions the mighty deeds he has accomplished for the welfare of the vassal, obliging him to gratitude and obedience. The style is in the I-thou form.
3. This prologue is succeeded by the ordinances of the covenant, showing the duties of the vassal and stating expressly his dependence on the author of the treaty, excluding the possibility of any other alliance.

- 1) see also G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I*, München 1958  
esp. p. 192 ff.
- 2) see further p. 39 below and compare note 3 on that page.
- 3) George E. Mendenhall, *Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law* BA 17/2 1954  
do. *Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition* BA 17/3 1954  
German translation: *Recht und Bund in Israel und dem Alten Vordern Orient*, ThSt H. 64, Zürich 1960
- 4) Beyerlin W., *Herkunft und Geschichte der ältesten Sinaitraditionen*,  
Tübingen 1961
- 5) Mendenhall, *Recht und Bund...* p. 9
- 6) see esp. Beyerlin, *op.cit.* p. 62 ff.  
Several such treaties are published in J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princeton 1950, p. 199 ff.

4. The vassal is requested to keep all the "words of this treaty", and there are mentioned threats in the case of his apostasy.
5. The Hittite treaty had to be written in order to be in force.
6. The treaty contained a list with a considerable number of witnesses, particularly gods, but including also heaven and earth.
7. This document had to be deposited in the holy place of the vassal people.
8. The text of the treaty had to be read to the vassal people at certain times.

The parallels between these treaties and the Decalogue are obvious and lead Mendenhall and Beyerlin to the conclusion that the Decalogue must have been shaped after the Hittite covenant-pattern<sup>1</sup>. If this theory be correct it would prove that from the earliest times of Israel the law was connected with the Covenant and that the Decalogue had its origin (Sitz im Leben) in God's action in history and not in the cult of Israel. From this point of view the great age of the Decalogue in its original form seems to be beyond doubt<sup>2</sup>.

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- 1) cf. Beyerlin, op.cit. p. 65: "Die Uebereinstimmungen zwischen den angeführten hethitischen Bundesverträgen und dem israelitischen Dekalog sind so zahlreich und so auffallend, dass man kaum umhin kann, anzunehmen, die Zehn Gebote seien - in formaler Hinsicht - nach dieser aus den Vasallenverträgen der Hethiter bekannt gewordenen und vermutlich im Nahen Osten des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr. allgemein gängigen Bundesform gestaltet worden."
  - 2) see Beyerlin, op.cit. p. 165 ff: Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse. "Da jenes Vertragsschema, das von den Hethitern im 14. und 13. vorchristlichen Jhdt. angewandt wurde, in der Mosezeit längst bekannt gewesen ist und sich auch räumlich in der Reichweite des Jahwevolkes befunden hat, steht der Annahme nichts im Wege, dass eine Urform des Dekalogs, dem Anspruch der Tradition gemäss ( Ex. 34,27 f; 24,4.7.12; 20,1), tatsächlich schon in mosaischer Zeit unter Verwendung jener Vertragsform entstanden ist." (p. 165).

Concerning the discussion on the age of the Decalogue see further: J.J. Stamm, ThR 27/3 p. 212 ff; 226-234.

W. Kessler, Die literarische, historische und theologische Problematik des Dekalogs, in Vetus Testamentum VII, 1957.

## § 2. The tradition of the Decalogue in the Old Testament.

In our previous chapter allusion was made to an "original Decalogue" which implies the idea that the Decalogue preserved in Ex. 20 and Deut. 5 is the result of a development covering a time of approximately 6-8 centuries. Most Old Testament scholars agree on this fact of development. The recognition of this theory is actually the only way to get a satisfactory interpretation of the Ten Commandments and an adequate evaluation of the Decalogue as a whole. The dating of the Decalogue in the time of the Exile or later, and the unconvincing interpretation of some parts of the commandments against a pre-Canaanite background, both suffer from the same lack of discerning different strata in the final form of the Decalogue.

If we compare the form of the Decalogue in Ex. 20 with that in Dt. 5 we find more than 20 differences in the wording. Most of them, however, do not result in a difference of meaning and need not be dealt with for our purpose. In the short comparison below we shall only note the deviations which are of importance for the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. The most striking differences are found in the 4th Commandment:

### Ex. 20

### both

### Deut. 5

Remember

the sabbath day, to keep it holy

Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, (or) your manservant, or your maidservant,

or your cattle

or the sojourner who is within your gates;

Observe

as the Lord your God commanded you

or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle



that your manservant and  
your maidservant ~~may~~ rest  
as well as you

for in six days the LORD made  
heaven and earth, the sea,  
and all that is in them, and  
rested the seventh day; there-  
fore the LORD blessed the sabbath  
day and hallowed it.

You shall remember that you were a  
servant in the land of Egypt, and  
the Lord your God brought you out  
thence with a mighty hand and an  
outstretched arm; therefore the  
LORD your God commanded you to keep  
the sabbath day.

In the first part of this commandment the main difference consists  
in the additions of Deuteronomy which intend to make the sense  
clearer. The reasons however why the Sabbath should be remembered  
are quite different. According to Exodus, the Fourth Commandment is  
based on God's own rest after the creation, whereas according to  
Deuteronomy it is the liberation from Egypt which forms the basis of  
the Sabbath-observance.

In the Fifth Commandment Deuteronomy has two additions: "as the LORD  
your God commanded you", and "and that it may go well with you".

The Eighth Commandment says in Exodus "lying witness", in Deuteronomy  
"false witness".

In the Tenth Commandment Exodus has the order "house... wife", whereas  
Deuteronomy mentions the wife before the house. Moreover, Deutero-  
nomy does not repeat the word "covet" (לֹא תִחְמֹד) but uses the ex-  
pression "desire" (וְלֹא תִחְשָׁק) in the second instance. Finally  
Deuteronomy adds "his field" after "your neighbour's house".

A careful comparison of these two forms of the Decalogue leads to  
the conclusion that the older form is preserved in Exodus. The  
additions in Deuteronomy are doubtless results of a wish to make some  
statements more precise. The replacement of the second לֹא תִחְמֹד  
(covet) by וְלֹא תִחְשָׁק (desire) in Deuteronomy gives evidence of a  
tendency to variety in style. The mentioning of the wife before

the house (Tenth Commandment) in Deuteronomy may be seen as a development in the estimation of women in Israel.

We shall not go here into the investigation of other differences, because they do not provide clear indications concerning the age of the two forms.

Special attention of course has to be given to the different motivation of the 4th Commandment, though the interpretation will be dealt with in § 4. According to a widely admitted theory the motivation in Exodus is younger than that in Deuteronomy. This view is based on the fact that the reason given for Sabbath-observance in Exodus is in close connexion with the account of the creation in Gen. 1 - 2,3, which text belongs to the document P, probably composed during or after the Exile.

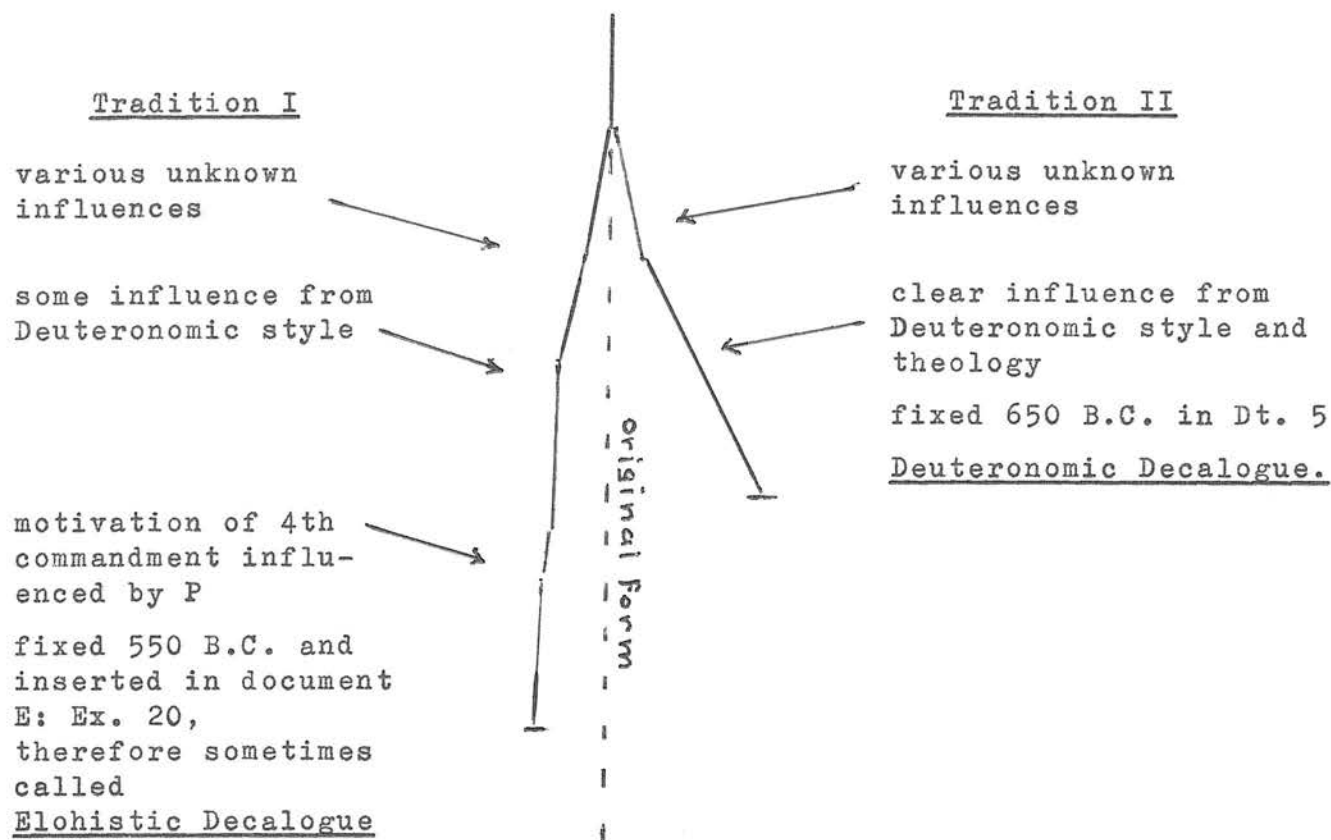
So we come to the somewhat peculiar conclusion that the tradition of the Decalogue which has preserved the more archaic form was written down later than its more developed tradition. That does not mean however that the original Decalogue has been changed so far by the Deuteronomist as to fit wholly into his peculiar theology. Though the form of the Decalogue is quite obviously influenced by the Deuteronomic theology, nevertheless it has preserved old formulations which stand in great tension if not contradiction to the general view of the Deuteronomic writer<sup>1</sup>.

This somewhat complex matter may become more intelligible from the sketch below. It shows the influences on both traditions of the Decalogue and their unequal distance from the supposed original Code. This sketch is of course conjectural and represents a solution which has only strong probability.

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1) compare Dt. 5,9 with 24,16!





It is not impossible that even after 550 B.C. minor changes in the form of the Commandments have been made. Charles for instance presumes that in the Second Commandment the words after "likeness" first existed as a marginal gloss and were not incorporated into the text until the 5th century B.C.<sup>1</sup> He gives two tables on the development of the Decalogue and ventures to state the periods in which different additions have entered the original form<sup>2</sup>.

Though the Decalogue in Exodus forms part of the document E we cannot derive from this fact the conclusion that this code here is preserved in the form it possessed when the document E was compiled<sup>3</sup>. Rowley<sup>4</sup> thinks that the Decalogue was inserted in the document E by its author himself, nevertheless he must admit that "there are evident traces

1) R.H. Charles, The Decalogue, Edinburgh 1923, p. ix-x; xxxviii-xxxix

2) op.cit. p. lv and lxiii

3) probably 8th century B.C.

4) Rowley, Moses and the Decalogue, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 34 No. 1. see p. 83-84.



Some scholars are convinced that the "cultic Decalogue" in Ex. 34 (in contradistinction to the "ethical Decalogue" in Ex. 20) is an original element of the J document and thus very old<sup>1</sup>, whereas others presume that these ritual commandments were inserted into the document J at a later time, possibly to avoid a repetition of the Decalogue as it is found in the E document Ex. 20.<sup>2</sup>

The preceding investigation made it clear, that neither Ex. 20 nor Dt. 5 contain the Decalogue in its original form. Some of the additions can be identified fairly well as regards their style or their theological background<sup>3</sup>. But it is less easy to come to a conclusion as to the original form of the Decalogue. Several scholars have made an attempt to reconstruct the primitive form, but the results vary greatly<sup>4</sup>.

There is a general agreement on the theory that the Commandments originally were in a short form, like the Commandments 6, 7 and 8, and that the 4th and 5th commandments probably had once a negative form like all the others. But the attempts at reconstruction are so vague and hypothetical that we need not go further into this matter<sup>5</sup>.

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1) e.g. Rowley

2) e.g. von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments I p. 190 n.4

3) see J.J. Stamm, ThR 27/3, p. 203 ff.

4) See for instance

Rud. Kittel, Geschichte des Volkes Israel I<sup>6</sup> 1932 p. 383 ff;

Karlheinz Rabast, Das apodiktische Recht im Deuteronomium und im Heiligkeitgesetz, 1949, p. 35 ff;

Hans Schmidt, Mose und der Dekalog, in Gunkel-Festschrift 1923.

5) We shall not take into consideration the so-called Papyrus Nash, found in Egypt, which contains the Decalogue written in the Hebrew language probably about 100 years B.C. Though this is the oldest manuscript of the Decalogue preserved, it represents a mixture of the two forms in Ex. 20 and Deut. 5 and cannot therefore shed any light on our question.

### § 3. The numbering and ordering of the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup>.

If we look at the division of the Commandments in Judaism and Christianity we find three different kinds of numbering.

a) The Reformed Church numbering. We take this numbering as a starting point, because according to most of the Old Testament scholars it is in agreement with the original intention of the designer of the Decalogue in Old Testament times. This numbering is used by the ancient Jewish writers Philo and Josephus, by Origen and the majority of the Fathers of the Early Church, by the Greek Church and by the Reformed Churches generally including the Anglican Church.

b) The numbering in the Roman-Catholic and Lutheran Churches. These Churches follow the example of Augustine in merging the first and second Commandments. In order to attain the number of ten commandments they split the last commandment into two. The Roman-Catholic Church has as ninth commandment "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife" and as tenth commandment "You shall not covet your neighbour's house etc.", whereas the Lutheran Church inverts these two commandments. So the Roman-Catholic Church is following the ordering in Deuteronomy, the Lutheran Church that in Exodus. (Augustine himself is inconsistent in the ordering of these two commandments).

c) The numbering in Judaism. The so-called "introductory formula" (I am the Lord your God...) is considered as the first commandment. To maintain the number of ten, the Jews put together the first and the second commandments.

During some centuries there was also a variableness in the ordering of the commandments. In Egypt the seventh commandment was usually put before the 6th, and this use has sometimes influenced the ordering in

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1) A detailed discussion of this subject is to be found in Zezschwitz, System der christlich kirchlichen Katechetik Bd. 2, and in Joh. Geffcken, Ueber die verschiedene Eintheilung des Decalogus und den Einfluss derselben auf den Cultus, Hamburg 1838.  
We shall confine ourselves here to the main topics.

the Early Church. This divergent order is found e.g. in Lk. 18,20; Rom. 13,9; Jas. 2,11. In other New Testament places however the Palestinian order is maintained: Mat. 5,21.27; 19,18; Mk. 10,19, and it is this order which later on prevailed in the Church.

Tabular summary of the different numberings

	<u>Reformed</u>	<u>Roman-Catholic + Lutheran</u>	<u>Jewish</u>
Introd.	I am the Lord...	I am the Lord...	
I	You shall have no other Gods before me	You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make yourself a graven image...	I am the Lord...
II	You shall not make yourself a graven image	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...	You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make yourself a graven image...
III	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain	Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...
IV	Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy	Honour your father and your mother...	Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...
V	Honour your father and your mother...	You shall not kill	Honour your father and your mother...
VI	You shall not kill	You shall not commit adultery	You shall not kill
VII	You shall not commit adultery	You shall not steal	You shall not commit adultery
VIII	You shall not steal	You shall not bear false witness	You shall not steal
IX	You shall not bear false witness...	You shall not covet your neighbour's <u>R.C.</u> <u>Luth.</u> wife      house	You shall not bear false witness...
X	You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or....	You shall not covet your neighbour's <u>R.C.</u> <u>Luth.</u> house, wife, or...      or...	You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or....

#### § 4. The interpretation of the Ten Commandments.

It is not our purpose to give a full account of the work done on this subject in the last decades, or to present all the theories and conjectures put forward by theologians so as to weigh and discuss the pros and cons. This would by far exceed the scope of our subject. In order to get a valid basis for our further investigation however we shall try to summarize those interpretations which seem to be well-founded and are approved of by several eminent Old Testament scholars. For further research see references to the pertinent literature at the beginning of each paragraph<sup>1</sup>.

##### 1. The Formula of Self-Introduction.<sup>2</sup>

The so-called Formula of Self-Introduction (I am Jahwe, your God...) is also found elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially in the document P, in the Law of Holiness<sup>3</sup>, in Ezekiel and in Deutero-Isaiah. In the document P this formula appears for the first time in Exodus 6 and shows that God's revelation, i.e. his self-introduction to Moses, is the starting point for Israel's history. The revelation of the name Jahwe is at the same time the revelation of the existence of this particular God in clear distinction from all the other gods. Especially in Deutero-Isaiah this formula shows God's supremacy and reality which actually degrades all the other Gods to mere idols and nothings.

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- 1) For recent interpretations of the whole Decalogue see  
 R.H. Charles, *The Decalogue*, Edinburgh 1923  
 J.J. Stamm, *Der Dekalog im Lichte der neuern Forschung*, Bern 1958  
 Martin Noth, *Das zweite Buche Mose*, ATD 5, Göttingen 1959  
 J.J. Stamm, *Dreissig Jahre Dekalogforschung*, ThR 27/3-4 (1961/2)  
 We shall not discuss the very biased Signet Key Book "The Ten Commandments" by A. Powell Davies (1956). The author takes practically no notice of the O.T. research of the last decades, because these findings are opposite to his aim. See op.cit. p. 66 n.20: "The only interpretative principle to which we are committed is that of the natural evolution of religious concepts, of which the religion of Israel is illustrative and typical." see further op.cit. p. 73, 81, and the summary on p. 125.
- 2) K. Elliger, *Ich bin der Herr, eure Gott*, in *Festschrift K.Heim*, Hamburg 1954  
 W. Zimmerli, *Ich bin Jahwe*, *Festschrift f. A.Alt*, Tübingen 1953



This God does not only reveal Himself as Jahwe, but He joins Himself to this particular people: I am Jahwe, your God. With unparalleled compassion he elects a tribe of slaves to become His chosen people. This election implies that the people of Jahwe listen to His voice and are obedient to His directions (thorot). Therefore the formula of self-introduction obviously had its special place in the declaration of the divine ordinances<sup>1</sup>. As Moses had to say to the Israelites "I am the Lord..."<sup>2</sup>, so the priests later on used this formula in connexion with the proclamation of Jahwe's statutes. This fact confirms the former statement<sup>3</sup> that the Decalogue had its place in the Israelite feast-liturgy.

"Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage", this again points to Jahwe's mercy and shows that the commanding Lord is the same who delivered Israel and constituted this people by a historical act, witnessing at the same time His power and His compassion.

## 2. First Commandment<sup>4</sup>.

In recent Old Testament research the customary translation of עַל־פָּנַי in this commandment ("You shall have no other Gods besides/before me") has been replaced by "against me", "in defiance of me"<sup>5</sup> or "prefer (other Gods) to me"<sup>6</sup>. There are two factors which commend this more recent translation: a) in other passages the term עַל־פָּנַי has unquestionably a hostile sense, i.e. against... b) God's holiness and His jealousy are in strict opposition to any worship of other Gods. From this exclusiveness results that the worshipping of another God always implies defiance of Jahwe<sup>7</sup>.

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1) Lev. 17-26; Ez. 20, Decalogue

2) Ex. 6,6; Lev. 18,1

3) see § 1

4) v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 203 ff.

W.F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, esp. p.271 f;

297 n.29.

5) LVT p. 767 b


6) Albright, op.cit. p. 297 n.29

7) for this thought see v. Rad, op.cit. p. 203 ff.

From this commandment it is sometimes inferred that the religion of Israel was monotheistic from its outset<sup>1</sup>. It is however very doubtful whether we can draw this conclusion. Many passages from the pre-exilic time presuppose a belief which reckoned with gods of other peoples as realities. What is stated in the First Commandment is the exclusiveness of Jahwe in relation to Israel, and many secondary precepts may be considered as applications of this basic commandment to special cases<sup>2</sup>.

But we are at any rate justified in speaking of monolatry or henotheism, which means that for Israel every relation to another God should be out of the question. In this respect Israel's religion differed greatly from all the other religions of that time<sup>3</sup>. As the motivation following the Second Commandment<sup>4</sup> refers to the First Commandment, Stamm<sup>5</sup> speaks of a "dynamic monolatry, which contained already the germ of monotheism". As a matter of fact, in Ex. 34,14 God's name is called "jealous" in connexion with a monolatric commandment<sup>6</sup>. It is thus the revelation of God's jealousy and holiness in history and not the outcome of philosophical thinking which formed the basis of monolatristic belief.

### 3. Second Commandment<sup>7</sup>.

The Second Commandment forbids the making of any image. Though the term  often denotes a graven (carved) image it is occasionally also

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1) e.g. Albright, op.cit. p. 211 f.

2) e.g. the regulations concerning unclean animals; cf. Noth, Ges. Studien p. 76 ff.

3) "Dieser intolerante Ausschiesslichkeitsanspruch ist religionsgeschichtlich ein Unikum, denn die antiken Kulte waren gegeneinander duldsam und liessen den Kultteilnehmern freie Hand, sich zugleich auch noch bei andern Gottheiten einer Segnung zu versichern." v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 207

4) Ex. 20, 5b - 6

5) Stamm, Der Dekalog... p. 33

6) cf. Dt. 6,14 f.

7) Bernhardt, K.H., Gott und Bild, Berlin 1956

Zimmerli, W., Das zweite Gebot, in Festschrift f. Bertholet, Tübingen 1950, p. 550



used for an image molten from metal<sup>1</sup>. It is almost certain that this prohibition concerns images of Jahwe, not such of other Gods<sup>2</sup>. The intention of the Second Commandment becomes clear if we understand the meaning of the images among the peoples surrounding Israel. The image is not identified with the deity, but it is the dwelling place of divine power, the spot where the divinity reveals itself, where it can be approached and met by man. In the image the god is not represented as matter, but matter becomes the vehicle of divine essence and power<sup>3</sup>. Consequently the image is not only the place where man meets his god, but the divine power is now somehow at man's disposition, he can make use of it by certain magical practices<sup>4</sup>.

It is obvious that this conception of a god who can be localized and used by man is in absolute contradiction to Jahwe's holiness, freedom and sovereignty. Though Jahwe has chosen ark and temple as places of revelation, he is not bound to them. The use of images would inevitably lead to the pagan conception of god. It is not Jahwe's invisibility and spirituality which is to be preserved by this prohibition<sup>5</sup>, but his freedom and his inaccessibility<sup>6</sup>.

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H.T. Obbink, Jahwebilder, ZAW 1929, p. 264 ff.

H. Schrade, Der verborgene Gott, Gottesbild und Gottesvorstellung im alten Israel und im alten Orient, 1949

J. Hempel, Das Bild in Bibel und Gottesdienst, Tübingen, 1957

v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 211 ff

- 1) see translation in LVT p. 770 a: "idol, image of a god (cut from stone, shaped from clay, carved from wood, finally also molten from metal)"
- 2) Zimmerli, v. Rad, Stamm, against Obbink
- 3) "Das wesentliche am Götterbilde ist... das göttliche Fluidum, das es erfüllt und damit zur Wohnung des Gottes werden lässt. - Wo das Gottesbild ist, da ist auch die Gottheit." Bernhardt, op.cit. p.31 + 29.
- 4) "Das Bild bedeutet die Herrschaft über die Gottheit", ib. p. 153.
- 5) so the interpretation by Volz, Mose und sein Werk, 1932, and Beer, Exodus, 1939.
- 6) "Das 2. Gebot will nicht zur Erwägung über das ewige Wesen des unsichtbaren Gottes führen, sondern zur gehorsamen Hinwendung zu dem

A further reason which lies behind this commandment is the different conception of the world which distinguishes Israel from the other peoples<sup>1</sup>. Jahwe is not the personification of some power in nature, and conversely nature is not the manifestation of Jahwe. He is the Creator of heaven and earth and as such transcends his creation. Image worship would blur this fundamental difference. Deuteronomy gives an interpretation of its own to this commandment: the Israelites have only heard God's voice, but not seen his "likeness" at Mount Sinai<sup>2</sup>.

The second part of the commandment<sup>3</sup> was probably added when Israel settled in Canaan and was in danger of representing Jahwe with images such as were used in the Baal worship<sup>4</sup>.

The further addition to the Second Commandment<sup>5</sup> actually refers to the First Commandment<sup>6</sup>. "To them"<sup>7</sup> points to the "other gods" of verse 3. The verbs "bow down to them and serve them" are only used in relation to foreign gods, never to their images, or to the worship of Jahwe. The mention of God's jealousy is further evidence that the speaker here has in mind the First Commandment. The worship of Jahwe, even if Jahwe were represented by an image, would not be thought of as arousing his jealousy.

Gott, der auch in seiner den Menschen nahe berührenden Offenbarung der souveräne Herr bleiben will und über den kein Menschenwille, auch kein frommer Menschenwille 'verfügt'." Zimmerli, op.cit.

1) see especially v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 216 f.

2) Dt. 4,15 ff

3) v. 4b

4) Dt. 27,15 seems to be older than the Second Commandment in its present formulation.

5) v. 5-6

6) see Zimmerli, op.cit.

7) v. 5

So we arrive at the interesting fact that the Second Commandment at an early date was seen in such a close connexion with the first that the addition referring to the jealous God could be put after the Second Commandment<sup>1</sup>. It is hardly possible to discover at what time this motivation of Jahwe's jealousy has been added. Its formulation "reminds of the deuteronomic-deuteronomistic style"<sup>2</sup>, but its theology is in contradiction to Deteronomy in general<sup>3</sup>.

4. Third Commandment<sup>4</sup>.

The Third Commandment forbids the taking of the name of the Lord in vain, i.e. for evil purposes. The name of the deity in ancient belief had a peculiar significance inasmuch as it took a part in the essence of its bearer. Through the pronounciation of the divine name the divine being was present, its power became effective. Israel was forbidden to make images of Jahwe and to make use of his power by this means. But he condescends so far as to reveal his name, though the name itself suggests that God does not give himself unconditionally to his people<sup>5</sup>. His freedom is maintained. Nevertheless the revelation of Jahwe's name was a guarantee that he really and fully was Israel's God, ready to listen to, to redeem and to bless his people. The name is holy in the same way as Jahwe is holy<sup>6</sup>. As the making of images was forbidden there existed no danger of misusing God's presence in the image. But this danger is not imaginary in relation to the name of the Lord. It was revealed for the right use in the cult: for sacrifice, prayer, blessing and cursing. Consequently the Third Commandment is directed against a wrong use of Jahwe's name, e.g. for magic practices, false swearing and unjustified cursing. Incantations which play a great part in the texts of the ancient East have no room in Israel.

1) The Roman-Catholic and Lutheran numbering with regard to our First and Second Commandments has thus a precedent in Israelite tradition. But considered from the "formgeschichtlichen" point of view the Second Commandment is independent of the First and has quite a specific intention.

2) M. Noth, Exodus

3) cf. Dt. 24,16

4) v. Rad, Theol.A.T. I p.183 ff    5) Ex. 3,13 ff.

5) Ex. 3,13 ff.

6) "War er aber heilig, so heisst das, dass er der Welt des Kultus zu-

## 5. Fourth Commandment<sup>1</sup>.

It has not been possible so far to find a satisfactory explanation about the origin of the Sabbath. There are various theories connecting the Jewish Sabbath with the Babylonian sapattu (15th day of the month) or surmising a Kenite rest-day which had been taken over by Moses. As none of these hypotheses is convincing and moreover does not provide a better understanding for the meaning of the Israelite Sabbath we need not go into this matter here<sup>2</sup>.

It is almost certain that the Sabbath commandment originally was promulgated without motivation and consisted only of a short formulation in the Decalogue. But just the lack of motivation in the early time makes it difficult for us to know what was really the Israelite conception of this peculiar day. One thing is obvious: as the 7th day in the Decalogue was connected with Jahwe who had delivered Israel from Egypt and who had chosen it as a partner in his covenant, this day was seen in a definite relation to God's sovereign authority and to his covenant. The surrounding peoples observed also certain days, but for fear of evil influences. Israel, however, by remembering and keeping the Sabbath day remembered Jahwe who promised life to his people. We may see certain parallels between the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year<sup>3</sup> and the offering of the first-born<sup>4</sup>. As the Israelites, by letting the fields lie fallow for one year every 7th year, confessed that the land was God's property, and as they sacrificed the first born and the first fruit which were tokens that all things belonged to Jahwe and were his gifts, so part of their time was set aside, as it were, given back to

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gehörte, ja man kann ihn eigentlich als das Herz des altisraelitischen Kultus bezeichnen." v. Rad, op.cit. p. 184

- 1) Ernst Jenni, Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebotes im Alten Testament, ThSt 46, 1956  
G.J. Botterweck, Der Sabbat im Alten Testament, Theol. Quartalschrift 1954 p. 134-147 and 448-457  
B.D. Eerdmans, Der Sabbath (Vom A.T., Karl Marti gewidmet, 1925)
- 2) For a summary of the various theories see Stamm, Der Dekalog.. p.39 ff and Botterweck, op.cit. p. 448 ff.
- 3) cf. v.Rad, Theol.A.T. I p.25 n.2
- 4) see Martin Buber, Moses, 1948 p. 121 f.

the Lord. The Sabbath in old Israel was however not a day of worship in our sense of the word. The abstention from work is the only thing asked of the people<sup>1</sup>.

In the Deuteronomic Decalogue the Fourth Commandment is followed by a motivation which connects the Sabbath with Israel's deliverance from Egypt. They had been servants in the land of Egypt, but as God has delivered them from bondage, their servants and even the cattle are to be freed from work on the Sabbath day. It is obvious that the Sabbath through this motivation becomes a constant reminder of God's loving kindness - he who "brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm". The Sabbath reflects the  $\text{שָׁבוּת}$ , the 'rest' of the people in the promised land. We have thus in Deuteronomy a "heils-geschichtliche" motivation of the Sabbath day.

In the priestly tradition we see a quite different motivation<sup>2</sup>. Because "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the 7th day, therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it"<sup>3</sup>. P in his thinking is not so much concerned with Israel's history as with the will of Jahwe who has made himself Israel's partner in the covenant. Therefore he considers the Sabbath as a fact which existed before God chose this people and revealed his will to it. As there was a heavenly pattern of the Tabernacle<sup>4</sup> which at a certain time had to be copied in Israel in order to provide a place of meeting between God and his people, so the "pattern" of the Sabbath is firmly established in creation and is called "a perpetual covenant"<sup>5</sup>.

In the priestly account of creation God ceases working on the seventh day, he blesses and sanctifies the day and thus creates communion

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1) "Mit irgendwelchen positiven gottesdienstlichen Begehungen ist der Sabbath im ältern Israel nie gefeiert worden" v. Rad, Theol.A.T.I p. 25 n.2

2) Gen. 2,2 f; Ex. 20,11; 31,17. It is generally admitted that Ex.20,11 has been inserted into the Decalogue with reference to the theology of P.

3) Ex. 20,11

4) Ex. 25,9

5) Ex. 31,16

between creator and creation; and this Sabbath becomes the pattern for the Sabbath day commanded in the Decalogue: God prepares a special time for communion with his people. As such the Sabbath is called a sign (*niš*)<sup>1</sup>, a guarantee of God's covenant. It is even part of the covenant, and by keeping the Sabbath the Israelites keep the covenant and prove themselves to be the people of God. We may conclude that by relating the Sabbath to creation, P brings back the idea of the covenant to creation, and thus testifies that the covenant is the essential aim of God's creation.

Though there is quite a different motivation of the Sabbath in P and Deuteronomy, there underlies a common conviction, i.e. the Sabbath points to the fact that God has chosen (created) Israel (man) to live in communion with him, to receive his blessings and to witness to his Lordship and his loving-kindness.

It is an interesting fact that in the Old Testament the Sabbath is exclusively related to Israel and even P who sees the Sabbath established in creation, does not allude to a present or future significance of this day for every people. Conversely the prophets who show the universality of God's salvation do not give the Sabbath a special function in their eschatological pictures. We may however surmise that according to P the Sabbath of creation in itself points to the "perfect aim of creation"<sup>2</sup>, but in Israel's history this day became more and more a means of separation from the other peoples and there is no evidence how God's blessing, testified by the Sabbath day, could be made available for mankind.

#### 6. Fifth Commandment.

This commandment is sometimes misunderstood and consequently leads to erroneous conclusions. If we submit that this precept is given to

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1) Ex. 31,17

2) Jenni, op.cit. p. 35



children (under age) then we get the inferences either that the Fifth Commandment does not fit into the tenor of the Decalogue which is supposed to be addressed to the fathers of families<sup>1</sup>, or that from this commandment we may conclude that the whole Decalogue is meant as a kind of catechism for the teaching of the children<sup>2</sup>.

As a matter of fact this commandment is not addressed to children "who are submitted to the 'patria potestas', but to grown-ups who themselves exercise 'patria potestas' and who shall pay the due honour to their ageing parents"<sup>3</sup>. If this is the factual meaning of the Fifth Commandment, both inferences mentioned above miss the point. To honour the parents in this case means to treat them kindly and let them share in the blessings of the land though their "life-value" is estimated less than a child's<sup>4</sup>.

Possibly the original wording of this precept was: You shall not curse your father and your mother"<sup>5</sup>. The present positive formulation excludes other condemnable acts against one's parents as well, such as striking them<sup>6</sup>, doing violence to them or evicting them<sup>7</sup>.

Probably it is the important idea of hereditary property ( וְהָאָדָמָה ) which underlies the promise following the commandment. The land of the fathers is transmitted to the sons, it is the property of the whole family. If the "children" honour their parents from whom the land (adamah) has come down to them, their life will be long in this land. Conversely a rupture between son and parents will result in the suspension of the normal relation to the land.

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- 1) cf. Hans Schmidt, Mose und der Dekalog, in Gunkel-Festschrift, Göttingen  
 2) so F.L. Steinmeyer, Der Dekalog als katechetischer Lehrstoff, Berlin 1875  
 3) M. Noth, Exodus, ATD p.133  
 4) cf. Lev. 27,5.7  
 5) cf. Ex. 21,17  
 6) Ex. 21,15  
 7) Prov. 19,26

## 7. Sixth Commandment<sup>1</sup>.

The Hebrew language uses several words for the verb "kill" (bring to death). Stamm in a careful study has examined the specific meaning of the various words by defining them according to their context. He concludes that **רצח** (used in the Sixth Commandment) in the Old Testament denotes two kinds of killing: a) the committing of murder, i.e. the killing of a personal adversary, and b) the unintentional killing of a neighbour<sup>2</sup>. These two meanings can be taken under the definition "unlawful killing, destroying the community"<sup>3</sup>.

The more usual words for "to kill" in Hebrew are **הרג** and **הָחַיָּה**. They denote the killing of a personal adversary, the slaying of the enemy in the battle, the execution of capital punishment and God's slaying by divine judgment. These terms cover thus a wider range than the verb **רצח**. They can be used for unlawful as well as for lawful killing, whereas **רצח** is confined to unlawful killing<sup>4</sup>. The killing of the enemy in or after the battle is often ordered by God (e.g. in holy war and through ban), similarly the putting to death for certain crimes. Consequently these instances are not affected by the prohibition of the Sixth Commandment.

## 8. Seventh Commandment.

The verb **הִנֵּה** in its strict sense means "to have sexual intercourse with the wife or betrothed of another man"<sup>5</sup>. The prohibition says nothing about polygamy nor does it include the seduction of a virgin who is not betrothed<sup>6</sup> or the marriage with women of a hostile people<sup>7</sup>. We may say that the range of the term **הִנֵּה** is similar to that of **רצח** in the Sixth Commandment. What is prohibited is that sexual intercourse which is bound to disturb or destroy the Israelite community.

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1) J.J. Stamm, Sprachliche Erwägungen zum Gebot "Du sollst nicht töten" ThZ 1945 p. 81 ff

2) e.g. Deut. 4,42

3) ungesetzliches, gemeinschaftswidriges Töten

4) with one exception: Num. 35,31 5) LVT p. 585 b

6) Ex. 22,16

7) Dt. 20,14; 21,10-14



Stamm<sup>1</sup> maintains that this commandment was not bound to a definite ancient social order and therefore was able to follow a developing and refining conception of marriage in Israel. In order to prove this opinion he refers to several passages in Proverbs<sup>2</sup>.

What are the reasons for the warning against going to the "strange woman", i.e. the wife of another Israelite? The pupil of the Sage is discouraged to do so not in the first place because it displeases God, but because "strangers (would) take their fill of your wealth"<sup>3</sup>; the danger lies in being caught by the lawful husband who "will not spare when he takes revenge"<sup>4</sup>. The idea that committing adultery is a transgression of God's law is not stated expressly, though we may surmise that this thought is not absent, e.g. in 5,5 where the Sage asserts that "her feet go down to death, her steps follow the path of Sheol"<sup>5</sup>. What is worked out at length in the chapters 5-7, however, are the personal disadvantages resulting from such relations. Compared with this, intercourse with a harlot is looked upon as rather harmless: not more than a loaf of bread is at stake<sup>6</sup> though eventually her lover may "squander his substance"<sup>7</sup>. We are not able to discover in these exhortations a refined conception

1) Der Dekalog im Lichte der neueren Forschung, p. 45-46.

2) "Dass Israel auch hier nicht stehen blieb, lässt sich den Warnungen des Spruchbuches vor Ehebruch und Unzucht entnehmen, insbesondere der Warnung vor der 'Fremden Frau' (= verheirateten Israelitin, Kap. 5)". Similar thoughts are found in W. Eichrodt, Theologie des A.T. II/III Göttingen 1961<sup>4</sup> p.234. Stamm does not repeat this idea in his later survey "Dreissig Jahre Dekalogforschung". see ThR 27/4 p.298.

3) Prov. 5,10

4) Prov. 6,31.34

5) cf. 7,27

6) 6,26

7) 29,3

of marriage. The Seventh Commandment is explained from a utilitarian point of view and the sense of  $\eta\delta\lambda$  as defined above has not changed in this late stage of Jewish literature<sup>1</sup>.

### 9. Eighth Commandment<sup>2</sup>.

Alt in his study on this commandment considers it highly probable that its formulation originally contained an object, and prohibited the theft of man, i.e. of a free Israelite<sup>3</sup>. If we take the Eighth Commandment in the present form, several questions as to its position in the Decalogue can hardly be solved, e.g.

- to what extent does it differ from the 10th Commandment, as  $\eta\eta\eta$  means "machinations for annexation of foreign property" (see below)?
- Why is it that a misdeed like theft, which is punished relatively mildly<sup>4</sup> finds its place between the prohibitions of extreme misdeeds in the Decalogue? (Otherwise theft is treated in casuistic and not in apodictic law).
- Why does the Decalogue only forbid to covet (= try to possess) the neighbour's house, wife, servant, cattle, and not the neighbour himself?

All these and some other questions are solved at once if we assume that the Eighth Commandment genuinely forbids the theft of a free Israelite, like Ex. 21,16: "Whoever steals a man, whether he sells him or is found in possession of him, shall be put to death." Dt. 24,7 expressly adds that with such a man is meant "one of the brethren, the people of Israel".

- 1) cf. Ad. Schlatter, Die Geschichte der ersten Christenheit, Gütersloh 1926 p. 159: "Der Fromme mied freilich die Dirne; aber an eine allgemein gültige Regel, die jeden Juden, der mit der Dirne verkehrte, von der Gemeinde ausschlosse, oder gar an ein jeden Menschen verpflichtendes Gesetz, das das Bordell und die Maitresse verböte, wurde im Judentum nie gedacht."
- 2) A. Alt, Das Verbot des Diebstahls im Dekalog, in Kl. Schriften I p. 333ff.
- 3) This is in agreement with the Rabbinic interpretation in Mekilta and Talmud. Stamm ThR 27 p. 299. cf. Str.-B. I 810 ff.
- 4) Ex. 22,1 ff.

With this interpretation we see that the commandments six to nine deal with the fundamental rights of the Israelites, as instituted by divine authority, i.e. life, marriage, freedom, honour, whereas the possessions are protected by the Tenth Commandment.

#### 10. Ninth Commandment<sup>1</sup>.

The terminology of this commandment is evidence that it applies to the realm of jurisdiction. The literal translation of Ex. 20,16 would be "You shall not give evidence as lying-witness against your neighbour", whereas Deuteronomy uses the word "vain-witness". The lay-courts in every village<sup>2</sup> were an important institution for the maintenance of justice in Israel, but their jurisdiction depended to a great extent on the honesty of the witnesses. If under certain circumstances the life of the accused was at stake, the testimony of one witness was not enough<sup>3</sup>. If the witness gives false evidence, then his punishment is according to his accusation: "If the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother"<sup>4</sup>.

This commandment therefore protects not only the honour of the Israelite, but in a wider sense also his property and his life which would be affected by a false witness.

In this commandment occurs for the first time the concept "neighbour" ( רֵעֵךְ ) which is defined as "the person with whom one meets casually and temporarily, or to whom one is related as neighbour, or inhabitant of the same place, or in any other connexion"<sup>5</sup>.

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1) H.J. Stoebe, Das achte Gebot, in Wort und Dienst, Jahrbuch der Theol. Schule Bethel, 1952.

2) see Ludwig Köhler, Die hebräische Rechtsgemeinde, in "Der Hebräische Mensch", Tübingen 1953

3) Nu. 35,30

4) Dt. 19,18 f.

5) LVT p. 897 b

### 11. Tenth Commandment<sup>1</sup>.

The verb **חמד** does not denote a disposition of mind in contradistinction to certain acts, but it comprehends the unlawful inclination as well as the machinations which lead to the annexion of foreign property<sup>2</sup>.

Our common translation of **חמד** with 'covet' is therefore too limited, as its Hebrew equivalent includes theft, robbery and every other action which aims at unlawful seizure of the neighbour's property.

It is generally admitted that this last commandment originally existed in a shorter form, e.g. "You shall not covet (= try to get in possession of) your neighbour's house". The conception "house" (**בית**) could either be taken in its literal sense, i.e. the house or tent with the land belonging to it, or, what is more probable, it stood for the whole property which belonged to the house. In the first case the additions were meant to extend the prohibition, in the second case they only formed a specification of "house"<sup>3</sup>.

The wording of the Tenth Commandment in Deuteronomy shows a double development. The verb **חמד** is not repeated as in Exodus, but in the second instance replaced by **התאזן**. This second verb, distinct from **חמד** which includes action, denotes only the impulse of the will or the inclination of mind. The Deuteronomist gives thus a specific interpretation of the verb **חמד**. As the Eighth Commandment had already been extended to theft in general, a duplicate in the Decalogue could be avoided by this interpretation of **חמד**.

- 1) J. Herrmann, Das zehnte Gebot, in Sellin-Festschrift, Leipzig 1927
- 2) This is worked out convincingly in Herrmann's study on the Tenth Commandment. His interpretation is approved by Alt, Kl.Schr. I p.333f; Koehler ThR NF 1 p. 183 (1929), Stamm, op.cit. It is noteworthy that already Luther in his catechisms explains the 9th and 10th commandments in this sense: WA 30 I 176.1; 288.25.  
cf. Eerdmans' translation (The Religion of Israel, Leiden 1947, p.31): "Thou shalt not appropriate..."
- 3) "V. 17b umschreibt den Gesamtbegriff des 'Besitzes', anfangend mit der Frau, die nach alttestamentlichem Eherecht zum Besitz des Mannes gehört, und endend mit einer allgemeinen Formulierung, die weitere Einzelaufzählungen erspart." Noth, Exodus, p. 134.

The second change consists in the new place given to the neighbour's wife. The additions of Ex. 17b were obviously not understood by the Deuteronomist as the specification of the term "house", but as additions to the first prohibited object, and thus it was felt more appropriate to put the wife in the first place of the enumeration.

## Chapter 2: The significance of the Law (Torah) in the religion of Israel.

### § 5. Covenant and Law in the Old Testament.

#### 1. Original relation of Covenant and Law.

The various traditions in the Pentateuch are unanimous in the conviction that the basis of Israel's existence is God's covenant (ברית) with his people. This covenant is not a contract between two equivalent partners, but the initiative lies exclusively on God's side. The Covenant between God and Abraham is as it were only the prelude to the Covenant at Mount Sinai. After Israel's liberation from Egypt God reveals to them that it is He who has "brought them out of the house of bondage". Although the people is exclusively the passive part in the establishing of the Covenant, nevertheless it is given a definite task, i.e. the Israelites are expected to stand and live within the Covenant, to obey God who has revealed himself as their Lord and to keep themselves free from all bondage to other lords.

In § 1 we have already mentioned that the proclamation of the Law (perhaps the Decalogue) had an important place in the Feast of Renewal of the Covenant<sup>1</sup>. The fact that most of the Old Testament precepts are connected with the events at Mount Sinai and with the person of Moses is also evidence for the close relationship between Covenant and Law. This connexion of the Law with an historical event shows that the Law was understood as historically limited. There is no attempt to derive it from creation.

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1) Dt. 31,10-13

Though it is almost impossible to distinguish with certainty by literary analysis the different traditions merged together in Exodus 19-24, we receive the impression that the traditions agree in the point that the establishing of the Covenant preceded the promulgation of the Law. However we notice a different accentuation in the various sources. J and P stress the divine initiative and action. The description of the Covenant at Mount Sinai by J, though it is incomplete, depicts the human partner as taking part in quite a passive manner<sup>1</sup>. In the extant text of the source P the author does not use the notion "Covenant" for the events at Mount Sinai, but where he relates God's covenants with Noah and Abraham it is exclusively God who acts (in the second instance while Abraham is sleeping). The expressions "God establishes his Covenant"<sup>2</sup>, "He gives his Covenant"<sup>3</sup> point in the same direction. According to E, Moses first tells the people the words of the Lord, and only after they have promised to be obedient, does he put the Covenant into effect by throwing the blood of the sacrifice upon the people<sup>4</sup>. In the Deuteronomic theology, Covenant and Law are placed in close connexion, so that the term "Covenant" occasionally can be used as a synonym of law (commandments). The tables with the Ten Commandments are called the "Tables of the Covenant"<sup>5</sup>. But the observance of the Law is rooted in the fact of the Covenant: "This day you have become the people of the Lord your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you this day"<sup>6</sup>. The conviction that God's initiative and decision precedes man's answer and action is evident in all the sources mentioned.

It is also an interesting fact that the specific Israelite commandments are neither according to their content nor to their form intended to

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1) Ex. 24, 9-11  
 3) Gen. 17,2  
 5) Dt. 9,9.11.15

2) Gen. 9,9  
 4) Ex. 24, 3-8  
 6) Dt. 27,9-10; cf. 7,6; 14,1 f.



establish the right relation of the people to their Lord, but they are obviously meant to prevent Israel from leaving an already existing relationship. The commandments concerning the life and actions of Israel are given in order to preserve the exclusiveness of the relation between God and his people. A great deal of the precepts are nothing else than elaborations of the First Commandment of the Decalogue, i.e. prohibitions which should avert apostasy from the true God who has made himself a partner of the Covenant. It is particularly this point which manifests the uniqueness of the religion of Israel among the other religions of that time<sup>1</sup>.

The commandments promulgated at Mount Sinai thus do not constitute the foundation for the new order, but they ensue as a means of maintaining it. This accounts to a great extent for the negative formulation of most of the principal precepts of apodictic law. They describe the actions which would disturb the order established by divine institution<sup>2</sup>. In other words, these negative commandments mark the boundary which must not be passed by the human covenant-partner lest he should leave the area of the Covenant<sup>3</sup>.

Von Rad<sup>4</sup> doubts whether our conception "Law" is the adequate expression of what the Israelites meant when they spoke about the revelation of God's will. The precepts of the Decalogue were not called the Ten Commandments, but the "Ten Words"<sup>5</sup>. The revelation of the divine will was a "guarantee of the election". Through these ordinances Israel

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- 1) "Den Begriff des Abfalls kennt die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte nicht; denn er ist nur eine Konsequenz aus der strengen Forderung der Bindung an nur einen einzigen Gott". M.Noth, Ges.Studien zum A.T. p. 70-71.
  - 2) "Es wird nicht geboten, was die Zugehörigkeit zu Jahwe verschafft, sondern verboten, was sie aufhebt". Gutbrod ThWNT IV p. 1030.
  - 3) "Stellen also diese Gebote das Leben keineswegs unter ein umfassendes normierendes Gesetz, so sagen wir sachgemässer, dass sie in bestimmten Randsituationen ein Bekenntnis zu Jahwe verlangen, und dieses Bekenntnis besteht eben in der Enthaltung von gewissen Praktiken, die Jahwe missfallen." v. Rad, Theol. d. A.T. I p. 196.
  - 4) op. cit. I p. 197
  - 5) Ex. 34,28; Dt. 4,13; 10,4.

became a "wise and understanding people", no other nation had statutes and ordinances so righteous as these<sup>1</sup>. The "Law" was not experienced as a burden but it was received with gladness and thankfulness<sup>2</sup>. This Law is "your life, and thereby you shall live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess."<sup>3</sup>

Although it was not the keeping of the Law which constituted the Covenant, nevertheless Israel's obedience was a decisive factor in it<sup>4</sup>. This is manifested in the proclamation of cursing and blessing which follows the instruction in the Law<sup>5</sup>. Here man's responsibility in the Covenant is made evident, i.e. man's task to respond in the right manner as God's Covenant partner. The right response results in blessing, the wrong one in a curse. However, it would be inaccurate to conclude that the blessing was exclusively dependent on man's attitude, in other words, that his observance of the Law was to be rewarded by God's blessings. This view could only arise where the meaning of the Covenant was misunderstood. Especially in Deuteronomy we find many passages which seem to suggest that the obedience of the people is the condition of the reception of God's gift<sup>6</sup>, but as in other places the divine election and the Covenant are presented clearly in their preeminent significance we can hardly blame the Deuteronomist for moralism<sup>7</sup>.

The promise inherent in the Covenant is established by God's initiative. As a matter of fact, God's blessing could be realized only within the

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1) Dt. 4,6.8.

2) Ps. 19,8 ff; 119

3) Dt. 32,37

4) see E. Würthwein, Der Sinn des Gesetzes im Alten Testament, ZThK 1958 p. 266 f.

5) Dt. 28; Lev. 26.

6) e.g. 6,18; 7,12; 8,1; 11,8 f; 16,20; 19,8 f; 28,9.

7) as does F. Baumgärtel, Verheissung, Gütersloh 1952, p. 66/7.

Covenant; if then the people by disobedience put themselves outside the Covenant they came under God's curse<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The change in the conception of Covenant and Law.

The political catastrophes which befell the state of Israel (Judah) especially at the beginning of the 6th century brought about great changes with regard to Covenant and Law. Not only did the people of Israel lose their independence, but the temple, the centre of their worship, was destroyed and a great part of the people deported to Babylon. There was no lack of interpretation of these events. The prophets had revealed this disaster as a result of the people's disobedience and apostasy. The Israelites were not primarily blamed for the transgression of single commandments, but for their general rebellion against the Lord, their forsaking and despising the Holy One. This apostasy highly affected the Covenant. Hosea had to call his third child Lo-ammi, "for you are not (any more) my people and I am not your God"<sup>2</sup>. Isaiah states that "Thou hast rejected thy people"<sup>3</sup>. "They have broken my Covenant" complains Jeremiah, and his prophecy of a future new covenant<sup>4</sup> reveals that the old one has somehow come to an end. The same idea appears in Ezekiel<sup>5</sup>. These sayings of the prophets were confirmed by the historical events already mentioned. The three promises constituting the covenant with Abraham were laid aside for the time being<sup>6</sup>: the "great nation" is decimated, the people are expelled from the promised land, and Jahwe is no longer "their God".

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1) Noth, Ges. Stud. p. 165 ff is of the opinion that the promise of blessing was a later addition in the sources. Von Rad rejects this theory. But Noth is certainly right in stating that blessing and curse lie not on the same level and are not meant as two equivalent human possibilities put to free choice. Israel was chosen to be Jahwe's Covenant partner and as such to partake in the blessings of the Covenant.

2) Hos. 1,9

3) Is. 2,6

4) Jer. 31,31-32

5) Ez. 16,59-63; 37,26-28

6) Gen. 17,4-8

We cannot be sure what effect the prophetic message concerning the broken Covenant had upon the people, but we notice a strong tendency towards restoring the old order after the catastrophe of 586<sup>1</sup>. The idea of the Covenant could not be emphasized after the disaster, which had been interpreted as the end of the Covenant in the old sense. But the people were still in possession of the Law and consequently it was the observance of the commandments which now became the centre of Jewish attention.

For the time being most of the ceremonial precepts could not be carried out as there was no temple and the greater or at least more important part of the people lived in exile. It was therefore the other precepts, like Sabbath observance and circumcision which were more strongly stressed. These observances were especially appropriate to manifest Israel's peculiar religion in contradistinction to the religion of Babylonia. The return of the exiles to Palestine under Cyrus and the rebuilding of the temple gave a new impetus to the hope of the Jews, but it is not clear whether they expected it to be the beginning of the new or the restoration of the old order. The lack of splendour of the new temple however, compared with the pre-exilic one, and the fact that the messianic hope connected with the person of Serubbabel was not realized, resulted only in dejection and embarrassment.

With the inauguration of the new temple (516 B.C.) the cultic ordinances could again come into force. The decisive event in the activities of restoration was the arrival of Esra in Jerusalem (in 458 B.C.). Esra, "the scribe of the law of the God of heaven" was sent to Jerusalem by the Persian king Artaxerxes. His task was to inquire about the religious

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1) Noth, op.cit. p. 87 ff, holds that the annulment of the Covenant was accepted as a fact and that the Jews now lived in the expectation of the future new covenant. But he admits that the expectation of the restoration of the old order was much stronger than the hope of the new Covenant.

situation in Judea and to arrange everything according to the "law of your God" which he brought with him<sup>1</sup>.

This event strengthened the impression that the old times had come back again. In the prayer of Ezra the post-exilic congregation is considered as the direct continuation of the league of the twelve tribes. The validity of the Covenant is not questioned. God is asked to show mercy to the congregation because they are still slaves of foreign kings, and this entreaty is based on the confession "our God... who keepest covenant and steadfast love"<sup>2</sup>. This confession however, a Deuteronomic formula, is not of fundamental significance in Ezra's prayer. When he, reminding God of Israel's history, speaks about the events at Mount Sinai, he does not use the word Covenant, but speaks fully about the ordinances, laws, statutes and commandments<sup>3</sup>. After his prayer, the people of Jerusalem make a firm agreement, sealed by the princes, priests, and Levites<sup>4</sup>. They "enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law which was given by Moses, the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his ordinances and statutes"<sup>5</sup>.

It is comprehensible that the post-exilic congregation was not able to speak about the Covenant with the same confidence as was possible in the old times. The Covenant had been established between Jahwe and the twelve tribes of Israel, but what now gathered in Jerusalem was only a small part of two or three tribes. And the sayings of the prophets about the broken old Covenant and the new Covenant to come were certainly not forgotten altogether. Nevertheless Ezra (or whoever composed his prayer) does not make any qualitative difference between God's judgments in former times and the catastrophe of 586. The uncertainty in relation to the Covenant was now glossed over by an overemphasizing of the Law. The Law at least was not gone, Ezra had brought the "law

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1) We may surmise that this law consisted of a collection of precepts handed down from pre-exilic times, cf. Noth, op.cit. p. 101 n.177. Whether it was the whole Pentateuch (Weiser, Einl. A.T. p.116) or only the legal parts of the Pentateuch (v.Rad, Theol.A.T. I p.96) is difficult to prove.

2) Neh. 9,32

3) Neh. 9,13-14

4) Neh. 9,38

5) Neh. 10,29



of their God" to Jerusalem and now attempted to put it into full force. This development resulted not only in a change of emphasis, it even reversed the basic conceptions of Covenant and Law. If originally the Covenant established by Jahwe was the basis of Israel's relation to their God, which on their part had to be preserved by living in accordance with God's Law, it is now the keeping of the Law which constitutes the relationship between man and God. If it was God's election of the twelve tribes which created the holy community, it is now the decision of man "to walk in God's Law" which becomes the basis of the congregation. The accent is shifted from God's election by sheer grace to man's endeavour of gaining God's goodwill by observing his commandments.

Parallel to this development was found the "individualization" of the relationship between God and man. Before the 6th century God's people was seen as a unity. The address "thou" in the commandments, though not ignoring the individual, meant the people as a whole, whereas in the post-exilic period the decision and attitude of the individual was more and more emphasized. This change was the presupposition for the admission of proselytes. Members of other peoples were allowed (and encouraged) to become members of the "Chosen People" on the basis of their own "choice", i.e. their decision to submit themselves to the Jewish Law. The passage Is. 56, 1-8 is very instructive in this respect.

A further consequence of this development is the fact that the commandments were not related to history any longer. More and more the precepts promulgated in the old time in connexion with certain phases of Israel's history were now looked upon as parts of general revelation of God's will, and could therefore be subsumed under the notion "Law" which was attributed with timeless validity. The term "Law" in this sense, i.e. denoting the collection of the most different commandments and precepts, appears already in Deuteronomy, but there it is still strongly related to history and is not yet understood in this general and absolute sense<sup>1</sup>.

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1) cf. v. Rad, Theo. A.T. I p.22: "Es liegt auf der Hand, dass dieser



In the post-exilic period, however, the "Law" in this absolute and timeless validity is given an independent position and forms the centre of Jewish thinking, instruction and life. The Psalms 1, 19 and 119 are evidence for the central place and eminence of the Law, though it is hard to make out whether these Psalms have to be seen at the beginning of the great change (influencing it), or whether they must be considered as results of it<sup>1</sup>.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances the notions "Covenant" and "Law" now become separate. This fact is evident in many Psalms and is especially striking in the source P. We have mentioned before that the account of P concerning the events at Mount Sinai does not speak about the Covenant. His interest is wholly concentrated on the revelation of God's ordinances concerning worship and daily life. So these commandments appear as absolute expressions of God's will and are only formally connected with the Sinai narrative.

On the other hand the conception "Covenant" lost its significant feature. There is made mention of a covenant with Noah<sup>2</sup>, with David<sup>3</sup>, with Levi<sup>4</sup>. The putting away of foreign wives and children on the

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Begriff 'Tora' nicht mit unserm Wort 'Gesetz' wiedergegeben werden kann, denn damit wäre sein Sinn theologisch verkürzt. Der deuteronomische Begriff 'Tora' meint das Ganze der heilsamen Willenszuwendungen Jahwes an Israel; man kann das Wort mit dem ebenso neutralen deutschen Wort 'Willensoffenbarung' wiedergeben."

- 1) Noth, op.cit. p. 116 f. supposes the first case, v. Rad, op.cit. I p. 201 and 476 the second one. see also E. Würthwein, Der Sinn des Gesetzes im Alten Testament, ZThK p. 268 f.  
Hans Joachim Kraus (Freude an Gottes Gesetz, EvTh 1951 H.8 p.337 ff) contends that in post-exilic times the conception of the Covenant was still basic in Jewish thinking. "Wir meinen feststellen zu können, dass der Bundesgedanke auch in nachexilischer Zeit die tragende Kraft gewesen ist, ohne die die Torah nicht verstanden werden kann." p. 341.
- 2) Gen. 9,8-17 P
- 3) e.g. 2 Chr. 13,5; 21,7; Ps. 89
- 4) e.g. Neh. 13,29; Mal. 2,4.5.8; Dan. 11,22

initiative of Ezra is depicted as a "covenant with God"<sup>1</sup>. That the tables could be identified with the covenant<sup>2</sup> is further evidence that the word covenant had lost its original meaning. Here too the terminology of Deuteronomy may have contributed its part to pave the way in that direction, though the covenant in Deuteronomy was not emptied of its original sense<sup>3</sup>.

Parallel to this alteration of the meaning of covenant was the devaluation of the conception "election"<sup>4</sup>. To the election of the people of Israel<sup>5</sup> were added the elections of the king David, the king Solomon, the tribe of Levi, the town of Jerusalem, the building of the temple, the Priests and Levites. So these terms had lost much of their historical significance, and, as they were used only in a traditional way, could assume new meanings which furthered the misconception concerning God's Covenant and Law.

The Law became not only the subject of meditation, but its teaching was given an important place. In former times instruction in the Law had always been the task of the priest. Probably the word Torah is derived from the verb 'jarad' (cast lots, oracles). Whether this assumption is correct or not<sup>6</sup>, the old narratives prove that the priests had to give advice to the people according to the necessities emanating from historical circumstances. This advice was either based on precepts already existing or introduced as new rules, i.e. as the revelation of God's will for the case in point<sup>7</sup>. After the exile the Law (= the whole bulk of commandments) became the subject of levitical teaching, and this instruction was probably carried out systematically, regardless of the historical circumstances or the need felt for this teaching.

1) Ezr. 10,2

2) 2 Chr. 6,11: the covenant of the Lord is in the ark

3) see page 30

4) Though the term "election" is a creation of Deuteronomy, the idea plays an important part in the older sources.

6) For a different theory see E.J. Tinsley, The imitation of God in Christ, London 1960 p. 36

5) Dt. 7,6

7) e.g. Hag. 2,11; cf. Dt. 17,8-11.

Again, to some extent, the outset of this development is already discernible in Deuteronomy. The existing commandments are not enlarged by new precepts, but interpreted in relation to the new situation<sup>1</sup>. But as the Levites of the time of Deuteronomy attempted a synchronisation of the establishing of the Covenant and the promulgation of the Law at Mount Sinai (or in Moab) with their own time, the "Law" is not treated as holy scripture, but as God's word and the historical relevance of the commandments is maintained.

In 2 Chr. 17,7-9 it is related that the king Josaphat sent five princes, eight Levites and two priests through all the cities of Judah, who had the book of the Law of the Lord with them and taught among the people. It is very likely that the author of Chronicles transmitted a practice of his own time to the period he was writing about. In Neh. 8,7 we are told again how the Levites interpreted the Law which was read to the people by Ezra. So we can detect here the roots of the later synagogue service and the important position of the scribes whose principal task was the interpretation of the Law and the harmonizing of the various commandments.

## § 6. The relation of the Decalogue to the Law as a whole in the

### Old Testament.

#### 1. The Decalogue in the Pentateuch.

In § 1 we have stated that the Decalogue belongs to the so-called apodictic law which is genuinely Israelite in form and content. There are of course other series of commandments belonging to this kind of

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1)cf. v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 80: "Die Ueberlieferung selbst steht für diese Prediger (scil. die Leviten) schon fest;... sie hatten das Ueberlieferte nicht weiterzubilden, sie hatten es vielmehr zu erklären. Mit ihnen beginnt also in Israel die Aera der Interpretation."

law which may even be older than the Decalogue in its present form, but if we disregard the later additions and changes in the formulation of the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup>, there are no compelling reasons for denying the Decalogue the position it occupies in Israel's tradition, i.e. that it stands at the beginning of Israel's history and is connected with God's Covenant constituted at Mount Sinai. It will probably never be possible to determine whether these commandments as such formed the basis and source for the further legislation<sup>2</sup> or whether they were intended as summary compiled by Priests on the basis of a much more extended legislative tradition already in existence<sup>3</sup>. What concerns us here is the position the Decalogue occupied in Israel's tradition and in this respect there is no doubt: the Ten Commandments were revealed by God at Mount Sinai.

In the narrative Ex. 19-20 the picture given of the events at Mount Sinai is rather confusing, as two sources (J and E) are merged and probably mixed with later additions<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore it is obvious that the Ten Commandments are inserted at a later stage in the E tradition and therefore interrupt the sequence of the narrative between 19,25 and 20,18.<sup>5</sup> This arrangement of the old traditions makes it impossible to decide whether the Decalogue was thought of as being spoken to the whole people or only to Moses. E gives the impression that God spoke only to Moses because the people was afraid to listen to God's voice<sup>6</sup> whereas 19,22 (from a hardly definable source) suggests that the whole people heard God speaking, though not from Mount Sinai, but from heaven. Another description of the events is given in Ex. 31,18 - ch. 34 (source J probably mixed with later additions). According to this tradition the Ten Commandments were written on two tables either by Moses<sup>7</sup> or by God himself<sup>8</sup>.

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1) see § 2

2) This is the opinion of P. Volz, *Mose und sein Werk*, Tübingen 1932<sup>2</sup>

3) cf. v. Rad, *Theol. A.T.* I p.192

4) see M. Noth, *Exodus*, ATD ad loc., cf. Beyerlin, *Herkunft...* p. 10 ff

5) cf. Beyerlin, *op.cit.* p. 16 f

6) Ex. 20,19.21

7) Ex. 34,28

8) Ex. 31,18. About the divergent content of the "Decalogue" in

Ex. 34 see § 2.

In Deuteronomy the various versions are combined. Here the Decalogue is introduced with the declaration "The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, while I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain"<sup>1</sup>. Thus on the one hand God is represented as speaking directly to the people, but on the other hand Moses is clearly the mediator. In 5,22 it is asserted that God spoke the Ten Commandments "to all your assembly at the mountain", but the people were so frightened that they were disinclined to listen any longer. God is apparently pleased with this attitude<sup>2</sup> and he agrees to tell all the other "commandments and the statutes and the ordinances" to Moses who became presently the teacher to the people<sup>3</sup>. After God had pronounced the Ten Commandments he wrote them upon two tables of stone and gave them to Moses<sup>4</sup>.

Though the Ten Commandments in the tradition of Israel had a peculiar position among the commandments (i.e. according to certain sources spoken to the whole people by God himself and written upon two tables of stone with the finger of God) we do not find any qualitative differentiation made between the Decalogue and the other part of the Law. All the statutes and ordinances in the Pentateuch are said to be promulgated by God and are even connected with the name of Moses and Mount Sinai.

We might say that the Decalogue was considered as the charter of the Covenant constitution whereas the other commandments formed the law (though not in our usual sense of the word) based on this constitution. But no attempt was made to separate, either theoretically or practically, the great bulk of the Law from the commandments of the Decalogue or to give the Decalogue a function of critical importance over against

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1) Dt. 5,4-5

2) Dt. 5,28-29

3) Dt. 5,31

4) Dt. 5,22; cf. 9,10, where expressly is said that the tables of stone were written with the finger of God.

the innumerable precepts of the Pentateuch. The whole Old Testament Law is considered the revelation and expression of God's will.

Neither was there made any difference between ceremonial, judicial and moral Law<sup>1</sup>. This is a later differentiation and has no room in Israel's conception of the Law. In point of fact the commandments of the Decalogue have a share in all of the three kinds of law.

The narrative concerning the promulgation of the Decalogue makes it quite clear that this charter was not looked upon as the revelation of a timeless and absolute law, but it was given to Israel as its constitution within the Covenant, after the deliverance from Egypt.

We have already adverted to the fact that the precepts contained in the Decalogue are never called the "Ten Commandments" in the Old Testament, but the "Ten Words"<sup>2</sup>, and that they as it were, marked only the border which might not be transgressed by the people which was called to live as God's partner in the Covenant. Within the frame of these negative commandments the life of Israel was regulated by positive precepts (e.g. Book of Covenant, Holiness Code), and the whole was later called the Torah (probably not before the second part of the 7th century B.C.).

If the Decalogue was considered the charter of the Covenant it is comprehensible that it should be spoken again to the people at certain occasions. In a previous section we have mentioned the Feast of Renewal of the Covenant which was celebrated every seventh year. Von Rad<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that the proclamation of the Decalogue with "high probability" formed the highlight of this celebration. But this Code is not mentioned in the passage in question<sup>4</sup> and so von Rad's suggestion is not more than a conjecture<sup>5</sup>.

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1) "Mit so summarischen Unterscheidungen wie der althergebrachten, derzufolge man das alttestamentliche Gesetz in ein Zeremonial- ein Judizial- und ein Moralgesezt teilte, ist heute nicht mehr auszukommen." v. Rad., Theol. A.T. II p. 204

2) Ex. 34,28; Dt. 4,13; 10,4

3) Theol. A.T. II p. 405

4) Dt. 31,11

5) Noth, Ges. Stud., p.55 n.100 calls this theory "very questionable".



## 2. The Decalogue in the Prophets.

It is interesting to note that the prophets never refer explicitly to the Decalogue. We may of course not draw fast and hard conclusions from this fact, because the prophets - at least those of the 8th century - did not so much inveigh against the transgression of single commandments, but against Israel's unfaithfulness and apostasy as a whole<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless Amos points out quite concrete sins. Würthwein<sup>2</sup> calls it a striking fact that there is not a single point in Amos' accusations where the essential contiguity with the Law is absent<sup>3</sup>. Bach<sup>4</sup> in a careful study comes to the conclusion that this prophet, in justification of his announcements of judgement, refers only to the apodictic law (sometimes even in contradiction to the casuistic law). However, no commandments of the Decalogue are concerned, but precepts from the book of Covenant, from the Holiness Code and from Deuteronomy. (Certainly parts of the commandments in Deuteronomy are based on old traditions which go back as far as Amos). W. Beyerlin<sup>5</sup> has undertaken a similar study with regard to Micah. The preaching of this prophet too is rooted in the old Law<sup>6</sup>. Several passages remind us of the Book of Covenant, the Holiness Code, and occasionally of single commandments of the Decalogue.

In Hosea 4,2 and Jeremiah 7,9 are enumerated several sins which remind us of commandments of the Decalogue, but even here we cannot take for

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1) see von Rad, Theol. A.T. II 410 ff.

2) E. Würthwein, Amos-Studien, ZAW 62 1949/50 p. 10-63

3) op.cit. p. 48

4) Rob. Bach, Gottesrecht und weltliches Recht in der Verkündigung des Propheten Amos, in Festschrift für G. Dehn, Neukirchen 1957.

5) Walter Beyerlin, Die Kulttraditionen Israels in der Verkündigung des Propheten Micha, Göttingen 1959

6) "Zusammenfassend dürfen wir sagen, dass die Verkündigung des Propheten Micha in erstaunlich grossem Umfang von den Traditionen des Amphiktyonenrechtes bestimmt ist." op.cit. p. 63.

granted that these prophets had really the Decalogue in mind, as there existed other similar codes of apodictic law<sup>1</sup>.

With the prophets of the 7th and 6th century the Torah played a greater part than with their predecessors, which may be caused partly by the false confidence of the people in the Law<sup>2</sup>. Ezekiel in his murky historical review depicts Israel's sin as rejection of God's ordinances<sup>3</sup> but it is very unlikely that he thought especially of the Decalogue. Which ordinances were in his mind can be seen from Ez. 18,5-9.<sup>4</sup>

We have already mentioned that for Israel all the commandments and statutes are related to God's revelation at Mount Sinai. There is, however, a peculiarity in Ezekiel inasmuch as he makes a difference between "ordinances, by whose observance man shall live"<sup>5</sup> and "statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life"<sup>6</sup>. With this second passage Ezekiel alludes to Ex. 22,29 ("The first-born of

1) cf. H.W. Wolf, BKAT XIV Hosea, p. 84: "Fünf absolute Infinitive nennen 5 Rechtsfälle, die das apodiktische Gottesrecht, also das genuin israelitische Recht, unter das Verbot des Gottes Israel gestellt hat. Dabei richten sich Wortlaut und Reihenfolge nicht genau nach dem Dekalog als dem bekanntesten Beleg apodiktischen Reihen."

Ph. J. Hyatt, "Torah in the Book of Jeremiah", in Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis 1941 p. 381 ff, contends that "the prophet identified the "true Torah" with "the ancient paths", that is the ethical will of Jahwe in the desert", and he thinks it possible that "Jeremiah thought of Torah as being embodied exclusively, or especially, in the ethical decalogue." It would be more prudent to say that Jeremiah as many other prophets drew upon the apodictic law in general, of which the Decalogue was of course an outstanding code.

2) Jer. 8,8

3) Ez. 20,10.13.21.24

4) W. Zimmerli, Die Eigenart der prophetischen Rede des Ezechiel, in ZAW 1954 p. 1 ff, observes that "der Prophet Ezechiel in seiner prophetischen Verkündigung in einer ganz auffallend starken Weise von Form und Gehalt des sakralen Rechtes... bestimmt ist." p. 20

5) Ez. 20,11

6) Ez. 20,25

your sons you shall give to me") which commandment in the time of Ahaz and Manas'sah seems to have been understood and practised literally<sup>1</sup>. This is indeed a singular interpretation of a commandment in the Old Testament, namely that God should have given bad statutes which actually killed. "Die paulinische Erkenntnis vom Wesen des Gesetzes ist hier in einer eigentümlich begrenzten Formulierung von ferne zu ahnen"<sup>2</sup>. But the great difference between Ezekiel and Paul in their conception of the Law is evident. For Ezekiel it is a misinterpreted commandment (though represented as being given by God in this sense) which kills. For Paul it is the commandments in general which kill, and this is demonstrated with a commandment from the Decalogue<sup>3</sup>. For the attempt to identify Ezekiel's "bad statutes" with the whole ceremonial law in early Christianity see § 12.2 e.

### 3. Conclusion.

It has become clear that the Old Testament provides no evidence for a peculiar estimation of the Decalogue or an extraordinary use made of it as distinct from the other commandments. It is a kind of charter which forms the basis for the ensuing regulations, a principal clause followed by corollaries, a description of the limits of covenant-life which asks for positive ordinances in order to regulate life within these borders. The Decalogue together with the bulk of other commandments forms an entity, the Torah, the embodiment of God's revelation to Israel at Mount Sinai.

If the Decalogue may be considered as a charter of constitution, it is natural that it should embody fundamental points of the Torah. But the proclamation of the Decalogue (or whichever code was read at the Feast of Renewal of the Covenant) was not intended to put Israel under an absolute Law, but to give it its share in the events at Mount Sinai

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1) see W. Zimmerli, Ezechiel, BKAT XIII p. 449

2) op.cit. ad loc.

3) Rom 7,7

and to realize the Covenant anew for each generation<sup>1</sup>.

The later development in Judaism will be described in the following section. But what has been stated here, i.e. that the Decalogue was in every respect an integral part of the whole Torah, applies to later times as well, though the conception of the "Law" underwent great changes. The Jews eventually went even so far as to abolish the reading of the Decalogue in the synagogue service in order to ward off the impression that God had promulgated only the Decalogue at Mount Sinai, as was held by some heretics, probably Christians<sup>2</sup>.

## § 7. The conception of Law in Rabbinic Judaism.

### 1. The central position of the Law.

By the notion "Judaism" is usually designated the religion of the Jews which developed in the Persian, Greek and Roman periods of Jewish history; on the other hand their religion before the fall of the Kingdom of Judah (586 B.C.) is called the religion of Israel<sup>3</sup>. This definition however can be misleading in two respects, i.e. we might infer from it that the religion of Israel at a certain point in history suddenly underwent a radical change, and that this change was brought about by the destruction of the Jewish state. Both inferences are misleading. The tribes of Israel had been Jahwe's people before they constituted a state. Therefore the dissolution of their state and their political dependence could not be in itself a reason for the change in their

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1) "Es gab... für Israel überhaupt keinen absolut über den Zeiten stehenden Rechtswillen Jahwes, denn jede Generation war neu aufgerufen auf den für sie gültigen göttlichen Willen zu hören und ihn sich zurechtzulegen. Wieder wird es deutlich: Die Gebote waren kein Gesetz, sondern ein Geschehen, das jeder Generation von Jahwe her jeweils in ihrem hic et nunc widerfuhr, und dem sie sich zu stellen hatte." v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 200

2) see p. 61.

3) G.F. Moore, Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era. The age of the Tannaim, Cambridge 1927, Vol. I p. 3

religion. On the other hand we may not think that this change took place suddenly and that we can therefore easily distinguish two different forms of religion, one before and the other after the exile. The changes happened little by little, during not less than a thousand years (if we include the making of the Babylonian Talmud), and sometimes the alterations occurred almost imperceptibly.

The most obvious and fatal of all the developments is to be seen in the new conception of the "Law"<sup>1</sup>. In a previous section we have already depicted the beginning of this change as it is discernible in the later canonical books and traditions. The close relationship between Covenant and Law was no longer maintained, the Law gained preponderance over the Covenant, while the significance of the term Covenant consequently volatilized. But through this dissociation of the "torot" from history they assumed the character of a timeless and absolute Torah, a Law which required absolute subjection to its demands<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. The Scribes.

The assumption that God's will was revealed in the Torah and that therefore the Torah had to be the absolute standard of Jewish life required intensive study and teaching of the Law. In the first postexilic period

1) "So komplex sich das Phänomen des Judentums dem Historiker darstellt und erst recht das Problem seiner Entstehung aus dem alten Israel, so ist doch daran festzuhalten, dass es im Innersten nur von jenem neuen Gesetzesverständnis her zu begreifen ist... Erst mit dem Verständnis der Tora Jahwes als eines "Gesetzes" ist das Judentum in die Geschichte eingetreten." v. Rad, Theol. A.T. I p. 99-100.

"La religion juive est la religion de la Loi; le régime politique qui caractérisait l'état juif était moins la théocratie que la nomocratie... La Tôrâ est... la base et comme l'axe de tout le Judaïsme." Bonsirven, Le Judaïsme Paléstinien, I p. 245 and 248.

2) "Ehedem dienten die Gebote dem Volk Israel bei seinem Weg durch die Geschichte und durch die Wirrsal heidnischer Kultformen; jetzt hatte Israel den Geboten zu dienen." v. Rad, op.cit. I p. 99.

this was especially the task of priests and Levites. The priest Ezra is the prototype of these scholars and teachers. "Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel"<sup>1</sup>. In Artaxerxes' letter he is called "the priest, the scribe (750) of the law of the God of heaven". Though the title 'sopher' originally denoted the "Secretary of Jewish belongings at the Persian Courts"<sup>2</sup> the term 'scribe' later became the terminus technicus for the Torah teachers in Judaism. How and when the office of the scribes was separated from that of the priests and Levites cannot be made out. But about the year 200 B.C. the scribes "were a professional class with a wide range of learning and activities"<sup>3</sup> as is evident from the book of Jesus son of Sirach. In the New Testament the two groups, now separated, appear under the names Sadducees (the priests and the aristocracy) and the 'scribes and Pharisees'. The Pharisees were those who attempted complete obedience to the Law (written and unwritten). Consequently "most of the Scribes were of this party, but the bulk of the Pharisees were not scholars".<sup>4</sup> After the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. the party of the Sadducees was reduced to an insignificant sect whereas the scribes, now called Rabbis (officially hakhamim, the Sages) became the exclusive leaders of Judaism.

We cannot discern with certainty when the party of the scribes developed into two classes, i.e. the ordained "scribes" called hakhamim with the title Rabbi and the unordained scribes who became "bible teachers" and had an inferior position to the ordained teachers<sup>5</sup>. The general opinion is that this change took place in the first century, possibly in connexion

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1) Ezr. 7,10

2) LVT p. 666

3) Moore, Judaism I p.41

4) ib. p. 66

5) For the discussion of the subject see Moore, Judaism I p.43 ff; Bonsirven op.cit. I p. 272 ff.

W. Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenist. Zeitalter, 3. Aufl. hersg. v. H. Gressmann, Tübingen 1926, p. 169

David Daube, New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, London 1956, p.205 ff.



with the development after the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.). According to Bousset, Rabbi in the New Testament was not yet a fixed title, but an address. Daube however contends that the two classes of scribes were already a fact in the first half of the first century. This supposition leads him to a peculiar interpretation of Mk. 1,22 and similar passages<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. The oral Law.

The notion Torah was extended in a twofold manner. Not only the written Law was considered to be the expression of God's will, but also the unwritten law, i.e. the traditions of the Elders. Secondly the Law, detached from the historical situation in which the commandments were promulgated, attained a character of perpetuity.

At an earlier stage, the precepts which were formulated at any time in the history of Israel were connected with Moses and God's revelation at Mount Sinai<sup>2</sup>. According to Deuteronomy, Jahwe spoke only the Decalogue to the whole people whereas Moses alone was told "all the commandments and the statutes and the ordinances" which he taught the people before they entered Canaan<sup>3</sup>. This of course is a projection which does not take into account the historical development of Israel and its traditions. We have stated elsewhere that even the Decalogue underwent considerable changes.

Since the earliest times there must have been an oral tradition containing the rules of execution of the different commandments (i.e. particulars concerning the sacrifices and the observance of the Sabbath, and material for jurisdiction). If then the written Law was held to be revealed completely to Moses "it was a very natural inference that its inseparable complement the unwritten law, which shared the immutability of all revelation, was revealed to him at the same time"<sup>4</sup>.

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1) see further § 10

3) Dt. 5,31

2) Ex. 19 - Num. 10

4) Moore, Judaism I p. 254

One of the principal works of the scribes was "to exhibit and establish the complete accord between scripture and tradition"<sup>1</sup>. This meant that on the one hand scriptural authority had to be secured as far as possible on behalf of the existing traditions, and on the other ancient commandments, which for some reason were not in practice any more, had to be revived. If necessary new decisions could be made by deduction from existing commandments. Though in this way the tradition grew constantly the additions were not considered new precepts because they were implicitly contained in God's revelation to Moses. By establishing a chain of tradition the authenticity of the unwritten law was guaranteed<sup>2</sup>. This authority on the basis of tradition was specially important if a precept could not be related to any commandment of the written Torah<sup>3</sup>.

By exegesis and combination of various passages there could also be established new precepts. Though unknown in the previous tradition they were not considered a new teaching, because everything had originally been revealed to Moses. Even if a great deal of the Law had been forgotten for some time the Rabbis were able to detect it again by their method of hermeneutics.

We can distinguish two aims in the formation of new decrees or enactments (gezerot for prohibitions, takkanot for ordinances of a positive character). The first concerns the adaption of old precepts to a new situation which could even lead to an actual abrogation of a precept of the Pentateuch, though theoretically it was not abolished, only put out

1) Moore, Judaism I p. 254

2) cf. Aboth I,1: "Moses received the Law (= including oral Law) from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders (Jos.24,31), and the elders to the Prophets (Jer. 7,25), and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue (120 elders coming up from the exile with Ezra)", then the chain goes on till the Rabbis of the 2nd century A.D.

3) see Bonsirven, op.cit. I p.271

of practice by a takkanah<sup>1</sup>. The second reason was the Rabbinic endeavour to "make a fence for the Law", i.e. to surround the Law with cautionary rules in order to keep man far from the possibility of transgressing the divine statute itself. The right and even the necessity of promulgating new rules according to the circumstances is among other things derived from Deut. 17,1-11.<sup>2</sup>

As the unwritten Law is not less related to God's revelation at Mount Sinai than the written Law, it ensues that the former has the same authority as the latter; according to some Rabbis the tradition even takes precedence over the written Law.

#### 4. The perpetuity of the Law.

The Torah (consisting of the written and unwritten revelation of God's will) is attributed a character of perpetuity by the identification of Torah with wisdom (hokmah). In Prov. 8,23 Wisdom speaks, "Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth". In Sirach 24,1 we hear again an eulogy of Wisdom: "From eternity, from the beginning He created me and unto the end of time I shall not cease" says wisdom<sup>3</sup>, and in v. 23 we find the significant equation, "all this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the Law which Moses commanded, an inheritance to the congregation of Jacob."<sup>4</sup>

The Torah is thus one of the seven things created before the beginning of the world. These are: the law, repentance, paradise, hell, the glorious throne (of God), the (celestial) temple, the name of the Messiah<sup>5</sup>. As wisdom (= the Torah) was beside God at creation (like a

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1) "Among the most noteworthy was the legal fiction called prozbul (or prosbul) devised by Hillel", see Moore I p. 259/60, Bousset op.cit. p. 131.

2) Moore, Judaism I p. 259, mentions as further supports Lev. 18,30, "Make an injunction additional to my injunction", and Ps. 119,126, "It is time to do something for the Lord".

3) v.9

4) for further evidences of this equation see Moore, I p. 264 f.

5) cf. Moore I 526; Str.-B. IV 435 ff; I, 245 f.



"master workman")<sup>1</sup> the Law is called the instrument of God in creation<sup>2</sup>.

Another idea in Rabbinic literature is that the world was created for the Law. This means that God designated the future relationship between creature and himself before he created the world. There arises even the thought that God himself is subjected to the Torah, that he has to study it and to act in agreement with it<sup>3</sup>.

Consequently the Torah is called the "eternal law"<sup>4</sup> and its precepts are "eternal commandments"<sup>5</sup>. Concerning the prohibition of the eating of blood the Book of Jubilees says, "And for this law there is no limit of days, for it is forever"<sup>6</sup>. Philo declares, "The provisions of this law... remain in fixity from the day they were written until now, and for the future we expect them to abide through all time as immortal, so long as the sun and moon and the whole heaven and the world exist."<sup>7</sup> There are found several sayings in Rabbinic literature which remind us strongly of a statement put in the mouth of Jesus<sup>8</sup>: "A yod from thee will never pass away"<sup>9</sup>. "The hooked part of a letter from thee Solomon shall not set aside"<sup>10</sup>.

- 1) Prov. 8,30
- 2) Aboth 3,14
- 3) "The three first hours of the day God sits and is busy with the Torah" Bab. Abodah Zarah 3 b.
- 4) Enoch 99,2
- 5) Tobit 1,6; cf. Enoch 99,2, Jos. contra Apionem 2,272
- 6) 6,14
- 7) Vita Mosis II, 3, 14
- 8) Mt. 5,18
- 9) Agadath Bereshith 75.2 (51a)
- 10) Rabbah Exodus 6 (72b). (Quotations 7-10 from Branscomb, op.cit.25 f). The reference to Solomon is explained by a passage in the Palestinian Talmud (Sanhd. 2,20,c): "Who accused Solomon (on account of his violation of Dt. 17,16 f, the prohibition of a plurality of wives)? R. Joshua ben Levi said, 'The yod in the word ירבה'. R. Simeon ben Yohai taught: The book of Deuteronomy raised itself, threw itself before God and said, 'Lord of the world, thou hast written in thy Torah, That testament of which a portion has become invalid, the whole has become invalid! Behold Solomon seeks to nullify a yod of me!' (Dt. 17,16 says expressly of the king, 'He shall not multiply wives unto himself,' לא ירבה, but Solomon said לי ארבה, I shall multiply, etc.). Then answered God, 'Solomon and thousands of his kind will pass away, but a word of thine will not pass away'."

The Rabbis were of the opinion that even in the Age to Come ('olam ha-ba) the Torah will be the subject of study and God himself will be the teacher<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless a difference is made between the Pentateuch and the other parts of the Torah (the nebiim and ketubim)<sup>2</sup>. As the prophets and hagiographs were only added because of sin, they will lose their validity in the messianic age when sin will be abolished. A great deal of the precepts in the Pentateuch too will no longer be put into practice (e.g. the sacrifices)<sup>3</sup>, but that does not mean that they are abrogated; they are, as it were, only out of use according to the changed circumstances.

The Jews believed that certain laws applying to all mankind were already given to Adam. To the 6 Adamitic commandments enumerated in various sources (with slight variations) we find the addition of a seventh precept given to Noah after the flood. These 7 commandments, usually called the Noachian Precepts, are (according to Levi): 1. Prohibition of the worship of other Gods; 2. Blaspheming the name of God; 3. Cursing judges; 4. Murder; 5. Incest and adultery; 6. Robbery; 7. Prohibition of flesh with the blood of life in it.<sup>4</sup>

The book of Jubilees holds that many commandments were given to Israel previous to the revelation at Mount Sinai. According to several rabbinic sources Abraham knew and kept both the written and the unwritten law. In other Jewish writings<sup>5</sup> we find the idea that the Torah in the desert had been revealed to all the nations in seventy languages, but it was rejected by all these peoples with the exception of Israel, which joyfully received it and promised to live in conformity to it.

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1) cf. Str.-B. IV p. 1153

2) Str.-B. I 246 f.

3) for an older and different view see Str.-B. IV p. 917

4) Concerning the identification of the Noachian Precepts with the Derech-erez see G. Klein, Der älteste Christliche Katechismus und die jüdische Propagandaliteratur, Berlin 1909, p. 63 ff.

5) Moore, Judaism I p. 277 ff; III p. 87 n.48.

Therefore every individual Gentile, who later decided to obey the commandments of the Torah, shares in its promises. According to another tradition God has chosen Israel because he did not find any other people capable of receiving the Torah; God foresaw the merits of Israel which would be acquired by the keeping of the Law<sup>1</sup>.

The Greek idea of 'agraphos nomos' is absolutely foreign to Jewish thought. When the Rabbis speak of the 'unwritten law' they always mean the oral tradition accompanying the written Law. Both are based on revelation. Philo who uses 'agraphos nomos' in the Greek sense only shows how far he is deviating from Old Testament and Rabbinic Theology<sup>2</sup>.

The coming Messiah was expected to be a prominent interpreter of the Torah<sup>3</sup>. Through his Messiah God will give a new Torah. The Torah which is learned in this world is nothing compared with the Torah of the Messiah. This does not mean however that the new Torah will be at variance with the old one given by Moses (which as a matter of fact is unchangeable), but the Messiah will interpret it in a new way, he will explain the reasons for the various commandments and reveal the treasures of knowledge which are hidden in them. Through this messianic teaching the whole Torah will appear as if it were new, so that God will have to confirm the new interpretation by his own authority.

#### 5. Merits and rewards in relation to the Law.

The Torah is of eminent importance because it means life for Israel<sup>4</sup>. It is a token of God's love that the Jews alone are given the Torah as a means to acquire merits and rewards. Man is endowed with free will

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1) Bonsirven, op.cit. I p. 78 and 90-91. See also II p. 73.

2) See J. Heinemann, Die Lehre vom ungeschriebenen Gesetz im jüdischen Schrifttum, in Hebr. Union College Annual Vol. IV 1927 p. 149-171

ThWNT I p. 769.14 ff.

3) For the following see Str.-B. IV, 1 ff

4) Evidences in Str.-B. III 129 ff; IV 3 ff



and therefore he can keep the Law perfectly if he chooses to do so. The Torah surrounds and accompanies the Israelites in such a way that everybody can daily produce a hundred 'mizwots' (keepings of commandments). With every fulfilment of a commandment he acquires merit, but every transgression results in a debt before God. Accordingly the registrations are made in the heavenly account. If rewards are thus acquired by the keeping of the Law we find the inference: God wanted Israel to acquire merits, therefore he has given it a great deal of Torah and Precepts<sup>1</sup>. Because the reward is in agreement with the merits it can also be said: the commandments are given as a means to acquire rewards (wages)<sup>2</sup>.

If the merits prevail, the man in question is considered just (zaddik) but if the debts are in the majority he is an evil-doer (rashah). As the Jew has no insight into the state of his account he must continually endeavour to multiply his mizwots. The books are balanced on several occasions by God, but finally at the hour of death. If the merits are in majority, the just may enter Gan Eden, but if the debts prevail, he has to enter Gehinnom. Occasionally there appears another point of view: a single sin suffices to destroy all the merits; a minute of repentance at the end of life effaces all the sins<sup>3</sup>. There is also mention made of the possibility of transmitting merits. The merits of the patriarchs are a treasure of good for Israel<sup>4</sup>.

It is natural that under these circumstances man's main concern must be to extend his merits and to reduce his debts. Beside the adding of mizwots he can multiply his merits by deeds of charity, such as giving alms, providing the poor with food and clothing, lodging guests, rearing orphans, visiting sick etc. With such deeds of charity the pious will acquire a treasure of merits. On the other hand he has the possibility

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1) Mak. 3,16

2) Examples in Str.-B IV 492

3) Bonsirven, op.cit. II p.59

4) ib. II p.61

of reducing his debts by different kinds of propitiation, e.g. by repentance, fasting and prayer. In this work of propitiation he is assisted by God through the sacrifices prescribed in the Law, through the day of atonement and through sufferings which are put upon him and finally through his death.

This understanding of the Law inevitably leads to unlimited casuistry. As God's will is revealed in the letter of the Law, conformity to the demand of the letter is equivalent to obedience to God. It was the task of the scribes to define the exact meaning of each precept, to explain in which case it is pertinent, to whom it applies, how much has to be done in order to keep the commandment and what is considered as going beyond the demand; whether a transgression has happened consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and inadvertently, which punishment has to be imposed for the propitiation etc. All these 'halakots' were established by the Rabbinic method of Midrash and finally codified in the books of Midrash and the Mishna.

Where this casuistry can lead is revealed in the deliberations of the Rabbis as to how a certain precept could be evaded to one's advantage on the basis of another precept. This is called "to act shrewdly" (maharimin), i.e. in such a way that the advantageous transgression of a commandment could be sanctioned by another precept<sup>1</sup>. As a matter of fact this kind of reasoning was condemned by several pious Rabbis who tried to put a stop to this development by various precepts and by emphasizing the right attitude of the heart over against an outward legalism. But the legal system of Judaism was so strong that this well intended reaction was not able to bring about a real change in the Jewish attitude towards the Law<sup>2</sup>.

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1) Instances by Str.-B. IV p. 17-18.

2) For evidences of this counter-movement see Str.-B. IV p.18-19; Bousset, *Op.cit.* p. 137 ff; Bonsirven, *op.cit.* II p. 62-64; and

If we ask about the motives, why the commandments should be kept, we have two quite different answers. The first states that God as Israel's king, who has delivered his people from Egypt, has the right to demand obedience. He has constituted the Covenant and preserved Israel in order that they keep his Law. Being both slaves and sons the Israelites have to sanctify God's name by obedience to his praise and glory. In older Rabbinism there are several evidences of this view, and consequently the reward (the wages) is not connected with man's merits, but with God's grace<sup>1</sup>.

The other motive is the fear of punishment and the hope of rewards, in one word, the Law is closely related to the idea of retribution, and it is this second motive which predominates. Obedience is inculcated with a view to the recompense gained by it. This is not always put as bluntly as in Aboth 2,4 ("Do his will as if it was thy will that he may do thy will as if it was his will"), but it is this thought which underlies most of the exhortations concerning the keeping of the commandments<sup>2</sup>.

As soon as the idea of reward was linked with the theory of merits this second motive was bound to push away the first one. The

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for its impotence Billerbeck's conclusion, IV p.15: "Diese Vorschriften und Aussprüche sind ohne durchgreifenden Erfolg geblieben; sie haben weder die Meinung erschüttert, dass die buchstäbliche Erfüllung des Gesetzes dem Willen Gottes Genüge tue, noch haben sie die auf der Grundlage der Gesetzesgerechtigkeit erwachsene Soteriologie der alten Synagoge modifizieren können. Jene Kautelen gleichen Schmuck- und Zierstücken, die man äusserlich am nomistischen Lehrgebäude angebracht hat; sie hätten auch fehlen können; die nomistische Soteriologie wäre von ihrem Fortfall unberührt geblieben."

1) see Str.-B. IV p. 488 ff.

2) cf. Bonsirven op.cit. II p. 67-69;

Bousset, op.cit. p. 410 ff makes a somewhat varying differentiation as to the motives, but his conclusions are similar to the ones depicted above.

deliverance from Egypt according to S.Nu. 15,41 showed God's kingship and constituted his right to demand from his people (= his slaves) unconditioned obedience. But in Mekh. Ex. 12,6 and Ex.R. 19 we find the statement that God first was not able to deliver Israel from Egypt because there were no merits. Only after they had acquired merits by the slaughter of the paschal lamb and by circumcision could they be redeemed<sup>1</sup>.

There were some differences in practice between the Palestinian and the Hellenistic Jews, but we need not here go into the matter, as these differences did not affect the basic similarity<sup>2</sup>.

A similar development is evident in the changing understanding of the word "justice". God's justice originally was seen in close connexion with his faithfulness and mercy. His justice was the guarantee of the Covenant. It was not in the first place a demanding justice, but a giving one. But in Judaism God's justice is more and more understood as judicial and retributive<sup>3</sup>. That does not mean that the Jews did not speak any more about God's mercy and loving kindness. But the two notions became separated, which resulted in a strong tension. If God "judges everybody according to his deeds"<sup>4</sup> it is natural that man's foremost attention is concentrated on how he can attain the approval of the heavenly judge, how he will be able to be justified according to his good deeds. This led automatically to the question of the right keeping of the Law<sup>5</sup>.

The hope and trust in God's mercy comes only in the second instance. The conviction that man is too weak to do God's will perfectly and

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- 1) Str.-B. IV p.39; for the whole development of this idea and further instances: Str.-B. IV p. 487-500.
  - 2) cf. Bousset, op.cit. p. 128: "Zwischen der Diaspora und dem palästiniensischen Judentum besteht hier nur ein Unterschied des Grades. Das Zeremonialgesetz begründet hier wie dort die Eigentümlichkeit des Judentums."
  - 3) Bousset, op.cit. p. 379 ff. distinguishes between "beteiligter und unbeteiligter Gerechtigkeit".
  - 4) Sir. 16,12
  - 5) "Die Frage, wie der Fromme gerecht vor Gott wird, oder wie er die

that he therefore depends on God's mercy is widespread in Judaism. But because mercy is subordinated to retributive justice, man never reaches certainty as to his salvation. He cannot but estimate himself according to his deeds. This leads on the one hand to despair<sup>1</sup>, on the other to relative satisfaction by comparing oneself with those who are less "just" than oneself<sup>2</sup>.

#### 6. The Decalogue in Judaism.

In Judaism there is no qualitative difference made between the Decalogue and the other commandments of the Torah. The whole Law was pre-existent and had only to be revealed at a certain moment in history, and this happened at Mount Sinai. Every single verse has to be considered as divine revelation: "Even if one said, 'the Torah is from God with the exception of this or that verse which Moses, not God, spake from his own mouth', then applies to him (the judgement), 'The word of the Lord has he despised' - an irreverence which it is declared merits the extermination of that soul"<sup>3</sup>.

In the way of promulgation, however, there is a difference between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Torah<sup>4</sup>. The Ten Words were pronounced by God himself with a loud voice, whereas the other part of the Law was told only to Moses, who had to teach it subsequently to Israel. According to one tradition every commandment after being proclaimed was taken by an angel and carried around for acceptance by the people. Another tradition holds that the commandments by themselves went round with the question whether the Israelites were ready to receive them. When they returned to God they were written by God's

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Gerechtigkeit Gottes erlangt, ist daher die Kernfrage der jüdischen Frömmigkeit... Der Weg, auf dem die Gerechtigkeit von den Frommen erlangt werden kann, ist der Weg des Gesetzes." Bousset, op.cit. p. 387; for detailed presentation of this subject, p. 378-394.

1) e.g. IV Ezra 3,20 ff; 7,116-126; 9,36

2) Lk. 18,9 ff.

3) Sanhd. 99a, quoted from Branscomb, op.cit. p. 22/23

4) For the following see Str.-B. IV p. 437 ff. III, p. 38 ff.

finger on the table of stone. According to a further tradition only the first two of the Ten Words were addressed to the people by God directly.

The idea however was not that the other commandments were additions to the Ten Words, as everything else was actually already contained in the Decalogue. This is obvious from the question the circulating commandments put before each Israelite: "Willst du mich auf dich nehmen? Soundsoviel Gebote liegen in mir, soundsoviel Rechte liegen in mir, soundsoviel Strafen liegen in mir, soundsoviel Vorbeugungsmassregeln liegen in mir und soviel Schlussfolgerungen vom Leichtern auf das Schwerere liegen in mir, soundsoviel Lohnausteilung liegt in mir."<sup>1</sup>

There are still two things which deserve mention in relation to the Decalogue. In Mekilta Jalqut I,299 there is a peculiar way of relating the two tables of stone, i.e. the First Commandment is linked with the Sixth, the Second with the Seventh etc<sup>2</sup>. In two cases an inner relation can really be established: by murder is diminished the likeness of the King (First and Sixth Commandments), and idol worship in the Old Testament is often represented as committing adultery (Second and Seventh Commandments). But the relations between the other pairs are rather artificial: he who steals will at last come to false swearing (Third and Eighth Commandments), whosoever keeps the Sabbath witnesses that God created this world and rested on the 7th day (Fourth and Ninth Commandments), whosoever covets at last begets a son that curses his father and his mother (Fifth and Tenth Commandments). This tradition is traced back to R. Hanina ben Gamaliel II, a contemporary of R. Akiba (1st/2nd century)<sup>3</sup>.

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1) Midr. H.L. 1,2; cf. Str.-B. IV p. 437-8.

2) according to Jewish numbering, see § 3.

3) This theory is quoted from C. Taylor, Sayings of the Jewish Fathers, Cambridge 1897, p. 122. cf. Jewish Encyclopaedia, art. Hanina ben Gamaliel II.





## Part Two

### THE DECALOGUE IN THE CATECHETICAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

#### Chapter 1: Catechetical teaching in New Testament times.

#### § 8. The early Christian catechism.

##### 1. Traces of an early Christian catechism.

Since the beginning of this century different scholars have given special attention to the question whether there existed a catechism in the early (pre-Pauline) Church<sup>1</sup>. Through profound study and careful comparison they came to positive conclusions which are far more than mere conjectures. We shall in the following give the main lines of their findings as far as they are relevant to our research.

As to the word "catechetical" teaching we are justified in using this conception even for this early time, because it occurs repeatedly in the New Testament, sometimes in a rather general sense, but in Gal. 6,6 in relation to the specific teaching in the Christian Church<sup>2</sup>.

In the apostolic preaching and teaching we can easily distinguish two elements: the proclamation of the Gospel or Good News (κήρυγμα) and the ethical instruction, i.e. the implication of the Gospel for

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- 1) e.g. A. Seeberg, Katechismus der Urchristenheit, Leipzig 1903  
 - Die Didache des Judentums und der Urchristenheit, Leipzig 1908  
 Ph. Carrington, The primitive Christian Catechism, Cambridge 1940  
 A.M. Hunter, Paul and his predecessors, London 1940  
 E.G. Selwyn, The first Epistle of St. Peter, London 1946/1952  
 C.H. Dodd, Gospel and Law, Cambridge 1950

#### 2) κατηχούμενος

the life of the faithful, usually in the form of exhortation<sup>1</sup>. In the New Testament the kerygma (proclamation of the Gospel) essentially always and formally as a rule precedes the ethical instruction or exhortation. This order is quite obvious in Paul's epistles, most striking in his epistle to the Romans. This fact is very important because it makes clear that the apostolic message is absolutely different from contemporary philosophical teaching. The stress lies on what God has done, on Christ's death and resurrection which together are the source of salvation for mankind. Through belief in this fact and baptism the sinner becomes a new creation and begins to live a new life. In order to take part in this salvation and become a child of God there is no condition but faith. The ethical instruction comes definitely in the second place and has no other aim than to show the faithful what it means to live according to and worthy of his calling.

Though we can distinguish these two elements (proclamation of the Gospel and ethical instruction) it is not possible to separate them lest we distort either of them. Proclamation without instruction would

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1) Dodd (Gospel and Law, Cambridge 1953<sup>3</sup>) denotes these two elements with the notions kerygma and didaché. We can of course choose these terms, but it is not quite correct to say: "This course of instruction in morals, as distinct from the proclamation of the gospel, is covered by the term "teaching", which in Greek is didaché" (op.cit. p.10). The word didaché in the New Testament covers a much wider range and can include the kerygma as well as the ethical instruction. It is the teaching to those who after hearing the kerygma have come to believe and need now further instruction both about their faith and their life. The difference between these two conceptions does not so much lie in the content of the preaching as in the hearers who are addressed and the place where the preaching happens. See ThWNT, art. *κηρύσσειν* and *διδάσκειν* ; Barth, K.D. IV/2 p.220 ff.

Parallel to this general use there seems to be however a development in which the word didaché assumes the more specific meaning of "ethical instruction" and is perhaps a synonym of "the ways"; compare Rom. 6,17 with 1 Cor. 4,17.

For a criticism of Dodd's presentation see J. Jeremias, ThLZ 1952 p. 614-615.

remain an idea without concrete form, whereas instruction without proclamation would become a mere rule of conduct (similar to the contemporary philosophical teaching) without relation to salvation. The worst mistake would of course be to exchange the place of the two elements, i.e. to say: a certain way of life leads to salvation, instead of: salvation is the inauguration of a new life. (This fatal misunderstanding entered the Church in the second century).

The unity of proclamation and ethical instruction in its unchangeable relationship had to be stressed, because in our further investigation we have to direct our attention - according to our subject - especially to the second element.

In the New Testament epistles there are various bodies of evidence which lead to the conclusion that there must have been a certain pattern of teaching from the earliest time of the Church.

#### a) The Words of the Lord.

It is not surprising that the words of the Lord played an important role in the teaching of the Early Church, and it is almost certain that there existed a collection of such words even before the Gospels were composed. In the matter of marriage Paul explicitly refers to a Word of the Lord<sup>1</sup>. Likewise he was able to appeal to the Lord in the question where the preacher should get his livelihood from<sup>2</sup>. The constitution of the Lord's Supper was something which Paul had received from the Lord (apparently through the mediation of the apostles). In delivering it to the Corinthians he becomes in turn a mediator of this tradition (παράδοσις). In his first epistle to the Thessalonians he likewise refers to a word of the Lord<sup>3</sup>. These are the three places in Paul's epistles where he introduces his quotations with explicit

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1) 1 Cor. 7,10  
3) 1 Thess. 4,15

2) 1 Cor. 9,14

reference to Jesus. But there are many other exhortations echoing the teaching of Jesus, although Paul does not mention their origin and usually puts them into his own words. Rom. 12-15 and 1 Thess. 4-5 are particularly suited for a comparative study with parts of the Gospels<sup>1</sup>.

b) An early pattern of teaching.

In connexion with the institution of the Lord's Supper we have already mentioned that Paul was the mediator of a tradition. This fact is also apparent from 1 Cor. 15,3: "I delivered to you... what I also received". In 1 Cor. 11,3 he commends the Corinthians because they maintained the traditions which he had delivered to them. Elsewhere he admonishes the Thessalonians to hold to the traditions which they were taught by the apostles<sup>2</sup> and to keep away from any brother who is not in accord with the traditions they received from them<sup>3</sup>. The Romans are said to have become obedient to the standard (*τύπος*) of teaching to which they were committed<sup>4</sup>. Though they were not taught by Paul, nevertheless he can point to a certain *didaché* which he takes for granted they have received<sup>5</sup>. In 1 Cor. 4,17 the teaching of Paul is called "my ways".

This pointing to the traditions not only proves that there was a pattern of teaching in the early Church, but it invites us, as it were, to investigate what kind of pattern it was. We shall have to confine ourselves to the ethical part of it.

There is still a preliminary question to be considered. When Paul in his epistles points to a tradition already delivered to the Churches, shall we then find the same material in the epistles too? In this matter 2 Thess. 2,15 is very informative. Paul exhorts the congregat-

1) cf. A.M. Hunter, op.cit. p. 55-60

E.J. Tinsley, *The Imitation of God in Christ*, London 1960 p.148 f.

W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London 1948 p.138 ff.

see further p.166f. of our thesis.

2) 2 Thess. 2,15

3) 2 Thess. 3,6

4) Rom. 6,17

5) Rom. 16,17

ion "to hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter". We may thus conclude that the exhortations in the epistles were quite similar to the tradition which was delivered orally. Another evidence is the letter to the Romans. Before he wrote this epistle Paul had not taught the congregation in Rome either by word of mouth or by letter. So his epistle to the Romans obviously contains Paul's basic teaching and not some secondary material.

If it can be taken for granted that there was a common pattern of teaching in the early Church, this pattern has to be disengaged by way of comparison. This work has been tackled by Carrington<sup>1</sup> and continued by Selwyn<sup>2</sup>. The most striking discovery in Carrington's study concerns a pattern consisting of four parts which show great similarities in the epistles of different writers.

The mainly compared texts are Col. 3,8 - 4,12; Eph. 4,22 - 6,19; 1 Peter A and B<sup>3</sup>; James 1,1 - 4,10. In each of these documents there can be distinguished 4 parts with equal initial words<sup>4</sup>, i.e.

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|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1) Wherefore putting off all evil | (Deponentes) |
| 2) Submit yourselves              | (Subjecti)   |
| 3) Watch and pray                 | (Vigilate)   |
| 4) Resist the devil               | (Resistite)  |

The formula "putting off all evil"<sup>5</sup> is introduced by the word "therefore" and thus linked with the preceding paragraph which speaks about the "new man" or "new birth" or "life with Christ". In three of the four formulae "deponentes" there are mentioned five sins, especially

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- 1) Philip Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Catechism*, Cambridge 1940
  - 2) Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The 1st Epistle of St. Peter*, London 1952, esp. Essay II: On the inter-relation of 1 Peter and other NT Epistles, p. 365-466.  
cf. W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London 1948
  - 3) 1 Peter is supposed to consist of 2 Epistles: A = 1 Pet. 1,1 - 4,11  
B = 1 Pet. 4,12 - 5,14
  - 4) For details we refer to the comparative tables in Carrington, op.cit. p. 31,42,43
  - 5) Eph. 4,25; Kol. 3,8; 1 Pet. 2,1 (A); Jas. 1,21



sins of speech, and the word *πᾶσις* (evil) occurs in all of them. The "put off" exhortation has as counterpart the following admonition to "desire the milk of the word" (Peter), "to receive the word" (James) or to "put on..." (Paul). As to the place of the phrase "deponentes" in the compared epistles, Carrington comes to the following conclusion: "It occupies the same position in a similar thought sequence, a point at which the status of the believer is defined as a new birth or a new creation."<sup>1</sup>

In the phrase "subjecti" there is more variety. The word occurs in every epistle in question<sup>2</sup>. According to Paul the subjects of subordination are husbands, fathers and masters of slaves, in Peter A the subjects are the emperor and governors, in Peter B the elders and in James, God.

The "vigilate", i.e. the exhortation to watch (and to pray) is found in four of the authorities compared<sup>3</sup>.

"Resistite" (resist the devil, or stand firm) occurs at the end of Ephesians, Peter B and James<sup>4</sup>. These are the only places where the command to resist the devil occurs in the New Testament, but we meet it again in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Mandata of Hermas<sup>5</sup>.

Traces of this fourfold pattern can also be discovered in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Selwyn<sup>6</sup> believes that there was still another element in the primitive catechism, closely linked with the eschatological teaching, i.e. the motif of darkness and light, connected with the exhortation to walk as the children of light. This motif occurs indeed in many epistles and is obviously developed from some sayings of the Lord<sup>7</sup>.

1) op.cit. p. 36

2) Col. 3,18; Eph. 5,21; 1 Pet. 2,13 (A); 1 Pet. 5,5 (B); Jas. 4,7.

3) Eph. 6,18; Col. 4,2; 1 Pet. 4,7 (A); 1 Pet. 5,8 (B).

4) Eph. 6,11; 1 Pet. 5,9; Jas. 4.

5) Selwyn thinks that the Vigilate and Resistite part of the pattern are traces of a persecution form; op.cit. p. 439-458.

6) op.cit. p. 375-382.

7) e.g. Lk. 16,8; John 12,36; Mt. 5,14.

Though these parallels between Paul, Peter and James have been observed for a long time, they have been attributed usually to the influence on the other writers of Paul's epistles. This supposition however is made quite improbable by the result of a careful study of the words used in the pattern. Many of these conceptions occur only in the pattern or in some similar passages and do not evidently form a part of the writer's common vocabulary<sup>1</sup>.

Still more remarkable than the use of peculiar words in the exhortatory sections is the application of a special style which does not fit in with the usual style of any of the writers. Dodd calls it "a concise, staccato style, using the fewest words possible"<sup>2</sup>. In addition there occurs in these sections also a grammatical peculiarity which is unusual in Greek, i.e. the verb in the exhortations is not put in the imperative mood as would be expected, but is used as a participle. It is a construction found only in such passages of ethical instruction in Rom., Col., Eph. as well as in 1 Pet. and Hebr. This participle was taken over into the Greek language from the technical language of religious codes in Hebrew<sup>3</sup>.

So both the content and the form of these exhortations seem to confirm that the writers of the New Testament epistles did not copy one another, but that all of them were grounded on an oral tradition, and that their ethical teaching reflects this early tradition.

We can of course not go farther than to call the exhortatory passages "reflections" of the oral pattern, because the early Church possessed certainly not a fixed code which was to be applied literally, but a drifting tradition was used and shaped in a free manner according to the writer and the practical need.

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1) see Carrington, op.cit. p. 47-57

2) Dodd, op.cit. p. 18

3) See D. Daube, Participle and Imperative in 1 Peter, appended note in Selwyn, op.cit. p. 467-488.

Finally our attention is drawn to two conceptions which occupy a central position in the ethical teaching, but are not confined to one of the above mentioned patterns, though they form sometimes part of them or may be related to them. These are the basic notions "love" and "imitation".

### c) Love and imitation.

The commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" occurs in the Holiness Code<sup>1</sup> and is declared by Jesus to be the "great commandment" together with the other one: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"<sup>2</sup>.

Paul cites this commandment in Rom. 13,9 adding that he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law, because love is the fulfilling of the Law<sup>3</sup>. According to John 13,34, Christ gave his disciples "a new commandment, that you love one another". It is not astonishing therefore that this commandment plays a predominant part in the ethical instruction, especially in the epistles of Paul, John and James (the latter calls it the "royal law"<sup>4</sup>). Love is the greatest of the spiritual gifts<sup>5</sup>, it binds everything together in perfect harmony<sup>6</sup>.

If we remember the many times Jesus speaks about following him it is quite natural that this point too should play a special role in the ethical teaching of the New Testament epistles. A following after Christ in the old sense was of course out of the question after his Ascension<sup>7</sup>, but the state of the Christian is now depicted as being

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1) Lev. 19,18

3) cf. Gal. 5,14

5) 1 Cor. 13,13

7) In the New Testament the term 'akolouthein' is confined to the relation of man to the historical Jesus. ThWNT I 215.12 ff.

2) Mk. 12,29-31 par.

4) Js. 2,8

6) Col. 3,14

"The idea of imitation is not to be found in the expression 'following Jesus', as such. However, this expression portrays a situation in which imitation not only very likely will develop, but where it must develop." W.P. de Boer, The Imitation of Paul, p.54.

"in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ) which means to be united with him in his sufferings as well as in his glory. According to the Synoptics and John, Jesus on several occasions had presented himself as the example which was to be imitated<sup>1</sup>. In the epistles the conception of imitation therefore is of considerable importance, though the term (μιμέομαι) does not appear in every case<sup>2</sup>.

According to Peter, Christ has left an example "that you should follow in his steps"<sup>3</sup>. Again and again Paul points to Christ's example: "Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you"<sup>4</sup>. The husbands are to love their wives as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it<sup>5</sup>. The Corinthians are called to be generous in their gifts as Jesus Christ, who was rich, became poor for their sake<sup>6</sup>. How ever we translate Phil. 2,5<sup>7</sup>, from the context it appears that Christ's humbling himself and his obedience must be taken as an example by the Philippians<sup>8</sup>. The Colossians are exhorted to "forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven you"<sup>9</sup>. Eph. 4,32 - 5,2 is particularly instructive: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God<sup>10</sup>, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us..."<sup>11</sup>. Paul himself is an imitator of Christ and therefore becomes an example for all Christians<sup>12</sup>.

1) Mt. 20,25-28; 11,29; Lk. 22,27; John 13,15

2) on this subject see

E.J. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ, London 1960, esp. p. 134 ff.

Willis P. de Boer, The Imitation of Paul, Kampen 1962, esp. p.50-91

Gustav Wingren, Was bedeutet die Forderung der Nachfolge Christi in evangelischer Ethik? ThLZ 1950 p.385 ff.

3) 1 Pet. 2,21

4) Rom. 15,7

5) Eph. 5,25

6) 2 Cor. 8,9

7) cf. de Boer, op.cit. p.59 ff 8) cf. Rom. 15,2-3

9) Col. 3,13

10) The conception of the imitation of God is in close parallel with that of the imitation of Christ and often overlapping. See de Boer, op.cit. p. 71 ff.

11) see also 1 Joh. 3,16; Hebr. 12,2-3

12) 1 Cor. 11,1; 1 Thes. 1,6; 2 Thes. 3,7.9; Phil. 3,7 and others. On

## 2. The origin of the early Christian catechism.

If we investigate the origin of the early Christian catechism our attention is drawn immediately to Jewish proselyte instruction. (This applies to the pattern and of course not to the words of the Lord and the terms "love" and "imitation").

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this subject see de Boer, op.cit. p. 92-205. De Boer points to the fact that the call to the imitation of Paul "appears in words directed to churches which Paul himself has founded and where he is personally known" (p.206) and has thus been "in a pattern-forming position" (p.214).

It seems strange that in face of all these facts Michaelis (ThWNT IV, esp. p. 670 ff) tries to convince the reader that "imitation" in the first place means obedience and not the imitation of an example. His way of reasoning from 1 Cor. 4,17 to 1 Cor. 11,1, arriving at the definition "Der 'mimetés' jemandes sein bedeutet: sich nach dem Gebot jemandes richten, jemandem Gehorsam sein" seems rather forced and inconsistent. His conclusion (p. 676.8f) "Die Forderung einer imitatio Christi hat in den paulinischen Aussagen keine Stütze" can hardly be maintained in face of the New Testament evidence. It is certainly correct to state that imitation is closely connected with obedience, but as it refers to an example and not just to words it cannot possibly be identified with obedience. If we want to understand properly what is meant by imitation in the New Testament we must not be influenced too much by the conception of 'imitatio' in later theology.

A similar aversion to the conception 'imitation' appears in Ed. Schweizer's study on Romans 12,1-8 (in the Bulletin 'Laity' of the WCC, 1961/2 p.11); see also Ed. Schweizer, Discipleship and Belief in Jesus as Lord from Jesus to the Hellenistic Church, NTS 1955/6 2 p. 87 ff, where he states that by seeing "in the pathway of Jesus the example which the Church had to imitate... the uniqueness of the way of Jesus would have been lost." (p.89).

De Boer (op.cit. p. 66 f.) draws our attention to the difference between being an imitator and being an imitation of Christ. 'Imitation' does not mean that we are just copying Jesus in as many respects as possible, (in the New Testament it is his gentleness, patience, humility, charity, compassion, obedience and suffering which are stressed, see Tinsley, op.cit. p. 150 ff, and de Boer, op.cit. p.69 f; similar items are in Paul's mind when he calls for the imitation of himself, see de Boer p. 207), nor does it signify that we are achieving a copy of his example by our own strength. The imperative of imitation is always grounded on the indicative of our union with Christ.



In the reception of proselytes into the Jewish congregation we can distinguish four different parts: 1) the presentation and examination of the candidate, 2) the instruction in the Jewish law, 3) circumcision (only if the candidate is a male), 4) baptism, connected with repetition of some commandments and short address of comfort<sup>1</sup>.

In the Babylonian Talmud a saying occurs several times<sup>2</sup> which shows the Jewish view about this conversion: "A newly converted proselyte is like a newborn child". This statement has a double meaning: the proselyte is cleansed from all his past sins and misdeeds, but at the same time all his relations to his family after the flesh are broken off. He belongs now to the "sons" of God<sup>3</sup>.

1 Pet. 2,21 in its context makes unmistakably clear how the 'imitation' has to be interpreted. (see de Boer, op.cit. p. 57 f; 67 ff). cf. Tinsley, op.cit. p.179: "It is just because the New Testament idea of the imitation of Christ is grounded in the historical Incarnation and Atonement that it is safeguarded from any tendency to become a doctrine of works or a denial of grace in a way which is not true when men have been summoned to the imitation of God."

Our criticism of Michaelis' interpretation of the term 'imitation' is corroborated by de Boer's painstaking study which we have repeatedly referred to. See his exegesis of the pertinent passages and his argument with Michaelis, summarized on p. 209-211. "When one rids himself of the idea that imitation must mean artificiality and slavish copying, and understands the idea in the sense of a child's adopting the ways he sees in his father and the other more mature people around him, the thought of the imitation of Christ is eminently well-suited to Paul's thought in these passages. The essence of imitation is not to be found at the point of obedience, as Michaelis proposes. The essence lies at the point of bringing to expression personally things that are observed in and learned from others."(p.211)

Concerning this question see further:

E. Brunner, Dogmatik III p. 337

W. Lillie, Studies in New Testament Ethics, p. 24 ff

- 1) Descriptions of this baptism are found in Yebamoth Bab. 47 and Gerim I. For detailed discussion see Gavin, The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments, p. 26 ff Brandt, Die jüdischen Baptismen, p. 57 ff. Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, London 1956 p.106-140
- 2) Yeb. 48b, 62a, 22a, 97b
- 3) Gerim 5. According to Daube the notion of a new birth was taken



In the above mentioned Jewish baptismal liturgies we are not told about the whole instruction given to the proselytes, except "some of the lighter and some of the weightier commandments"<sup>1</sup> which are obviously an extract from the preceding ethical teaching<sup>2</sup>. But in Yeb. 47a, a sentence occurs which shows clearly that the instruction pointed to the things which had to be avoided and to the new commandments to be observed: "In the same way as they instruct him about the penalties of transgression shall they teach him the rewards for observance of the commandments."

There is strong evidence that the book Leviticus, especially the Holiness Code<sup>3</sup> played an important part in the instruction of the proselytes. Jewish baptism has its origin in Leviticus<sup>4</sup>. Hertz declares that "in ancient times the Jewish child began the study of Scripture with Leviticus"<sup>5</sup>. Especially chapter 19 was looked upon as the kernel of the Law, a counterpart of the Decalogue, as the Ten Commandments are in essence repeated in its verses, so that the Rabbis came to the conclusion: "The essentials of the Torah are summarized therein"<sup>6</sup>.

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so seriously that "in principle, a proselyte, being newly born, could marry any of his relatives even if the relative, too, had become a Jew." op.cit. 113.

- 1) The notions qal and hamur may be understood in the double sense light or easy, weighty or burdensome. Daube, op.cit. p. 120
- 2) According to Daube, op.cit. p. 121, "we may go as far as to assert that, in listening to the commandment during baptism, the proselyte stood at mount Sinai". On the ground of various sources Daube suggests what might have been the precepts taught to the proselytes. If this view, supported by Siph. on Num. 15,41 is correct, it is however surprising that the Decalogue should be absent in proselyte instruction.
- 3) Lev. 17-26
- 4) Lev. 15-17
- 5) J.H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, London 1929 ff., Lev. p.3
- 6) Sifra; according to Hertz, op.cit. p. 188.  
On the other hand Daube (op.cit. p. 126) holds that "one source of Paul's predilection for 'enduein' (to put on) surely was the allegorical interpretation of Dt. 10,18" which verse was considered to give indications for proselyte instruction by the Rabbis.

Considering the importance of Leviticus and its use in the instruction of Jewish children we may submit that this book formed also the basis of the teaching to the proselytes, the more as they were regarded as "newborn children". There are especially two principles which run like red threads through the Code of Holiness, namely:

"You shall not walk in their (= the heathen) statutes" Lev. 18,2

and often, and

"You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them"

Lev. 18,4 and often.

In one word: "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy"<sup>1</sup>.

This is exactly what must have been the content of the teaching to the proselytes according to the above mentioned quotation from Yeb. 47.

Let us now compare this entering of gentiles into the Jewish community with their entering into the Christian Church. There are some striking formal parallels. Of the four different parts mentioned in connexion with the receiving of the proselytes we find three in the Christian Church: 1) the instruction (kerygma or didaché), 2) the examination of the candidates (their belief), 3) baptism. In Judaism conversion of a gentile signified the transition from uncleanness to the people which alone is called "sons" of God<sup>2</sup>. In the Church, those who "once were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God" through faith and baptism have become "members of the household of God"<sup>3</sup>.

Now we have come to the point where we can take up the comparison with our previous paragraph. In the exhortatory pattern consisting of four parts the first part (deponentes) is introduced with the words:

"Wherefore putting off all evil" (the 'wherefore' pointing to the state as "new man", "new birth" or to the union with Christ). It is followed by the positive indication concerning the things which are to be desired,

1) Lev. 19,2

2) Ger. I,5

3) Eph. 2,12.19

received or put on. This is a striking parallel to the teaching of the Holiness Code and the instruction given to the Jewish Proselytes.

The first epistle of Peter makes it quite clear that the Church was looked upon as a neo-Levitical community. The very words which were spoken to Israel at Mount Sinai are now applied to the Christians: they are the royal priesthood, God's holy people<sup>1</sup>. In 1 Pet. 1,16 we have an explicit quotation from Leviticus<sup>2</sup>: "You shall be holy, for I am holy".

Another important source of teaching in Judaism was the Literature of Wisdom, especially the Wisdom of Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus). In this last mentioned book, the first word addressed directly to the pupil is about temptation which awaits him<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, in Jewish proselyte baptism, the candidates were first warned that they had to expect afflictions and persecution<sup>4</sup>. It may not be without relevance that the first theme dealt with in 1 Pet. and James is about temptation<sup>5</sup>.

In Eccl. 2,7-9 there is a threefold exhortation for those who fear the Lord, i.e. to show endurance, faith and hope. In the New Testament we have a similar triad, but there endurance is replaced by love. Paul opens the first Epistle to the Thessalonians with this triad<sup>6</sup>.

Another Jewish source which may have served as a basis for Jewish teaching is the apocryphal book of Tobit. Chapter 4 especially reminds us both in style and content of many exhortations found in the New Testament epistles<sup>7</sup>.

The large number of exhortations in Judaism were at a certain time systematized in the "Two Ways": The Way of Life (Light) and the Way of Death (Darkness). This special pattern is not expressly used in the

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1) 1 Pet. 2,9

2) Lev. 11,44; 19,2

3) Eccl. 2,2

4) Gavin, op.cit. p. 33

5) 1 Pet. 1,6; Jas. 1,2

6) 1 Thes. 1,3

7) G. Klein, "Der älteste christliche Katechismus..." is of the opinion that Ps. 34 formed an important basis for the New Testament pattern of exhortation. op.cit. p. 153 ff.

New Testament (though there are allusions to it), but it became probably dominant in the catechetical teaching of the second century. Both the Didache and Barnabas use the "Two Ways", borrowed from the Jewish tradition and slightly christianised (at least in the Didache)<sup>1</sup>.

As to the origin of the "catalogues of virtues and vices" in the Epistles the scholars were in uncertainty<sup>2</sup> until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These documents have now revealed unmistakably that such catalogues had a firm place in late Jewish tradition where they were connected with the scheme of the Two Ways<sup>3</sup>. To a great extent they were taken over for Christian ethical instruction, but occasionally Paul inserts terms from stoic catalogues (see below) into the traditional Jewish pattern<sup>4</sup>.

There are of course many other parallels between the Old Testament, Jewish tradition and the Christian ethical instruction. For details we refer especially to the studies by Carrington, Selwyn and Daube<sup>5</sup>.

1) see § 11,1-2

2) see ThWNT V p.56 ff; 92f; 99.

3) Wibbing has dealt with this matter in a painstaking investigation: Siegfried Wibbing, *Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament und ihre Traditionsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Qumran-Texte*, ZNW Beiheft 25 (1959). See esp. his conclusion p.114: "So zeigen die neutestamentlichen Tugend- und Lasterkataloge ihrem Inhalt nach in den Hauptbegriffen und in ihrer Struktur klar, dass sie in der spätjüdischen Tradition, die in geschlossenem Zusammenhang in den Qumran-Texten vorliegt, fest verwurzelt sind. Diese Tatsache wird noch dadurch bestätigt, dass auch ihre eschatologische Ausrichtung auf das Endgericht mit diesem spätjüdischen Traditionserbe fest verbunden ist."

4) see Wibbing, op.cit. p. 101 ff and 118.

It has sometimes been conjectured that the catalogue of 1 Tim. 1,9f was based on the Decalogue. See e.g. J. Jeremias, *Untersuchungen zum Quellenproblem der Apostelgeschichte*, ZNW 1937 p.210. It might however not be possible either to prove or to disprove an intended relation of this passage to the Decalogue. cf. M. Dibelius, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, 1955 p.20: "Aus dem Dekalog ist freilich gerade das Eigenartige unserer Stelle, die Katalogform, nicht herzuleiten, nicht die Einteilung in vier Doppelglieder und Einzelglieder, nicht die typische katechetische Schlussfloskel. Wir haben es zum mindesten mit einer hellenistischen Transformation jüdischer Ethik zu tun." Dibelius points to Pseudo-Phokylides 3ff, which shows also a seeming contiguity to the Decalogue.

5) Selwyn is of the opinion that Carrington puts the problem too simply.

Besides these Jewish sources we have also to reckon with pagan influence upon the New Testament exhortation. Weidinger<sup>1</sup> holds that the "Household Rules" (= the Subjecti-part of the Carrington pattern) are of Stoic origin and were taken over and adapted by Hellenistic Judaism<sup>2</sup>.

Catalogues of virtues and vices were common in the Pythagoreans, the writers of comedy and the philosophers<sup>3</sup>. They were even used in games as inscriptions on counters<sup>4</sup>.

These influences of Jewish and pagan sources on the early Christian catechism does not however signify that the first Christians developed their ethics mainly by gathering material from several pre- and non-Christian sources. Christian ethics were built on a basically new foundation, and stones from other buildings were only used as far as they could be fitted into the new building without marring its design or departing from its foundation<sup>5</sup>. Christ is the all determining

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He distinguishes different strata in the catechetical New Testament pattern, according to the temporal and geographical development of the early Christian mission. (Selwyn, op.cit. p. 414-419). From the point of view of form, Daube distinguishes five parts in the Tannaitic catechism, comparing them with passages in the New Testament: 1) the test, 2) the commandments, 3) charity, 4) the penalties, 5) the reward and the World to Come. The parallels - especially concerning the form and the subjects dealt with - between this Tannaitic catechism and the New Testament instruction are obvious, but the differences in content are much more striking than the similarities in form.

- 1) K. Weidinger, Die Haustafeln, Ein Stück urchristlicher Paränese, Untersuchungen z. N.T. 14, Leipzig 1928.
- 2) cf. Weidinger, op.cit. p. 50: "Ob das Christentum seine 'Haustafeln' dem Judentum oder dem Heidentum unmittelbar verdankt, ist nicht auszumachen."
- 3) cf. Aristotle, Eth. Nic. II,7
- 4) Ad. Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, London 1911<sup>2</sup> p.320f.
- 5) This applies to some extent also to Paul's style of preaching. Bultmann (Der Stil der Paulinischen Predigt und die kynisch-stoische Diatribe, Göttingen 1910) has demonstrated how Paul made use of the popular philosophical style of his time, but this style is absolutely subjected to the aim it is used for.



magnetic pole, everything is either adjusted to this center or repelled<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. The Decalogue in the New Testament catechetical Teaching.

When we study the early catechism in the Epistles we come to the most remarkable discovery that neither the Decalogue as a whole nor single commandments of it are ever used as the basis of ethical teaching. In Paul's epistles there are three references to commandments of the Decalogue. In Rom. 7,7 he quotes the Tenth Commandment to show that the Law raises sin<sup>2</sup>. There is no connexion with ethical instruction here. In Rom. 13,9 Paul quotes the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Tenth Commandments to prove that he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law. These commandments form thus not a part of his exhortation, but are cited by way of demonstration.

Eph. 6,2 has to be considered more closely, for in this passage Paul (or whoever is the author of this Epistle) quotes the fifth Commandment in connexion with his exhortation addressed to the children to obey their parents. We must however conclude that this commandment does not form the basis or direct motivation of his exhortation, as it is only an insertion in the pattern of the "Household Rules". In Col. 3,18 ff we find a similar pattern with the same admonition to the children, but without reference to the Fifth Commandment. In this text Paul only adds the word: "for this pleases the Lord"<sup>3</sup>.

The absence of the Ten Commandments as a means of exhortation is the more striking as there would have been many a good opportunity for using them. The reason for this extraordinary fact will be investigated in the following paragraph.

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1) On the basic difference between the ethics of the Qumran Sect and the New Testament see Wibbing, op.cit. p. 122.

2) For the interpretation of this passage see § 9

3) cf. 1 Tim. 5,4; 1 Pet. 5,5.



§ 9. Theological reasons for absence of the Decalogue in Paul's  
ethical teaching.

1. Introduction.

From the previous chapter it has become evident that Paul's epistles are the main source of our knowledge about catechetical teaching in New Testament times. This fact in and by itself does of course not justify us in making Paul the paramount authority in the question of how the catechetical instruction ought to be shaped. Would it not be possible to consider the synoptic Gospels<sup>1</sup>, the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Epistle of James as equivalent authorities in this realm? The reason for our specific approach lies elsewhere.

The scope of the present study is not to examine the catechetical teaching as such, but to investigate the place and significance of the Law, especially the Decalogue in that teaching. Now it appears that among the New Testament witnesses it is Paul who has not only faced and discussed this question most fundamentally and clearly, but has also by his actual instruction shown the approach which is in agreement with his theological insight. This is closely related to the fact that Paul was the "Apostle of the Gentiles" and was therefore compelled to tackle the problem of the connexion between the Old Testament and the Gentile Churches. His conclusions in this matter have to be seen in a direct relation to the life and teaching of Jesus. Nevertheless, Paul's dealings with the Old Testament Law are not on the same level as those of Jesus. This difference in attitude is due to a double change in circumstances:

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1) It has been said that Matthew in his Gospel intended to provide the Church with a kind of Church Order and a catechism of Christian behaviour. see E. v. Dobschütz, Matthäus als Rabbi und Katechet, ZNW 1928 p. 344.

- a) Jesus came in the first place to create a new reality, i.e. reconciliation, and did not himself draw the conclusions and show the effects of his work in a systematic way. Paul however had the special gift of drawing the conclusions from this new reality. To him (as to the other apostles) is revealed "the secret of Christ, which in former generations was not disclosed to the human race"<sup>1</sup>. The insight into this mystery plays an important part in Paul's theology. It was Jesus' destiny to be the Messiah and to die on the Cross, but it was the task of the Apostles to proclaim Christ and the meaning of his death and resurrection for the world.
- b) Jesus was born under the Law and lived as a Jew. Though his attitude towards the Law was critical to the point that he laid down a criterion to which the Law had to be submitted, he did not himself step outside the realm of the Jewish Law. We can hardly find an example in the Gospels how Jesus would deal with pagans. John relates explicitly that Jesus did not consider the wish of some Greeks to meet him as an occasion for teaching them, but from this fact he drew the conclusion that "the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified"<sup>2</sup>, that is, to create the new reality by his death which was the condition for bearing much fruit.

Among the Apostles it is especially Paul who considered himself to be "entrusted with the Gospel for Gentiles"<sup>3</sup> in a quite outstanding manner. As to the confession of faith "Jesus is Lord" there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. But what about the Old Testament Law? Has it to become the standard, either wholly or partly, for the shaping of Christian life in the gentile Christian congregations? Paul who was called to be the apostle to the gentiles was given the insight as to how this question had to be decided.

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1) Eph. 3,4-5

2) Joh. 12,20-24

3) Gal. 2,7

Jesus as the Messiah of Israel addressed himself to Jews before his death and resurrection, whereas Paul speaks to the gentiles after the risen Christ has revealed himself as the Lord of the world<sup>1</sup>.

With these differences in mind we may not expect to find with Paul the same attitude towards the Law as with Jesus. On the other hand the basis for Paul's conclusions must be discernible somehow in Jesus' words and actions. After the discussion of Paul's teaching we shall therefore try to trace his theology back to its fountainhead, which doubtless lies in Jesus himself. But we do not start from the Gospels in our investigation for two reasons: as already mentioned we have to take into account that Jesus as described in the Gospels deals with the Jews as one with the people under the Law, and secondly that Jesus is presented to us according to the conception of the authors of the Gospels and their respective traditions<sup>2</sup>.

If we make Paul's theology the starting point for our investigation and conclusions, it does not imply a depreciation of the other New Testament witnesses, which might eventually lead to the dissolution of the canon. But we realistically acknowledge that Paul according to his calling and his insight is able to give guidance in a matter which is not dealt with in the same fundamental manner by the other New Testament witnesses. On the contrary, we often are perplexed by strange contradictions. According to Matthew the disciples are advised to obey the Jewish religious leaders: "The doctors of the law and the Pharisees sit in the chair of Moses; therefore do what they tell you; pay attention to their words"<sup>3</sup>. But this very group is attacked by the accusation: "You have made God's law null and void out of respect for your tradition"<sup>4</sup>.

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- 1) cf. W. Kümmel, *Jesus und Paulus*, ThBl 1940 Sp.216: "Ein wirklich entscheidender Unterschied (scil. zwischen der Verkündigung Jesu und Pauli) besteht darin, dass Paulus in einer ganz andern heilsgeschichtlichen Situation steht als Jesus."
  - 2) see e.g. V. Hasler, *Gesetz und Evangelium in der alten Kirche bis Origenes*, Zürich 1953, esp. p. 9-26.
  - 3) Mt. 23,2
  - 4) Mt. 15,5-6; Concerning Mt. 5,17-19 and the Antitheses cf. G. Bornkamm, *Enderwartung und Kirche im*

There still remain two questions which have to be considered with regard to our approach. The first one: Can we rely on the assumption that Paul who was not a disciple of Jesus, knew him well enough to draw far-reaching conclusions from his words and actions concerning the validity or invalidity of the Jewish Law for the Gentiles, or should it perhaps be necessary to correct Paul in this respect on the basis of the Gospels? In answering this question we venture the proposition that Paul knew more about Jesus' life and words than we ever shall be able to know from the sources collected in the canon. Not only was Paul repeatedly in close contact with the faithful before his conversion, but after his experience on the way to Damascus he spent a fortnight with Cephas, meeting also James the Lord's brother<sup>1</sup>. During this time Paul was certainly able to enquire about the details of Jesus' life and teaching. About three years had elapsed since his conversion and he doubtless had certain questions which he wanted answered by the first-hand witnesses in Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>.

Compared with the possibilities open to us Paul had thus a threefold advantage: he was informed directly by Peter and James, not to speak of other contemporaries of Jesus, he was able to put questions concerning the points which seemed to him most important with regard to his task, and he thus received first-hand information which had not yet been influenced by the development of the following decades. The first of

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Matthäusevangelium, in Bornkamm etc., Ueberlieferung und Auslegung im Mt. Ev. 1960, p.22-23: "Matthäus versteht diese Radikalisierung der göttlichen Forderung, die ja faktisch nur in der ersten, zweiten und vierten Antithese eine Verschärfung des Gesetzes, in der dritten, fünften und sechsten dagegen seine Aufhebung bedeutet, offensichtlich als Bestätigung der Gültigkeit des Gesetzes bis hin zu Jota und Häkchen, ohne die Diskrepanz dieser Antithesen zu der an Jota und Häkchen festhaltenden, also die Verbindlichkeit des "Wortlautes" aus-sprechenden jüdisch-judenchristlichen Formulierung von 23,18,f zu empfinden. Seine Bindung an Jesu eigenes Wort und an das Gesetzes-verständnis der jüdisch-judenchristlichen Tradition stehen hier in unverkennbarer Spannung zueinander."

cf. Ed. Schweizer, ThLZ 1952/8 Sp. 479: Matth. 5,17-20, Anmerkungen zum Gesetzesverständnis des Matthäus.

1) Gal. 1,18-19

2) If Paul in Gal. 1,11-12 emphasizes that he did not take over his

the Gospels which we have to rely on was written approximately thirty years after Paul's interview with Peter and James, and though we may put various questions to the authors of the Gospels we do not always get unequivocal answers, especially if we ask about matters which do not lie within the scope of the writers. This applies particularly to the problem of the relation of the Jewish Law to the Gentiles.

The second question is related to the first one: have we not to take into account that Paul's conception of the Law to a great extent is influenced by the attitude of his adversaries, in other words, that when Paul spoke about the Law he used the term according to the conception (= misconception) of the Judaists? As we to-day are not in opposition to Judaists, should we not be allowed or even urged to supersede Paul on this point, i.e. to take the term "Law" in a more "comprehensive" and positive sense and consequently give it an appropriate place in our catechetical teaching?<sup>1</sup>

This is an important question which cannot be answered before we have studied Paul's conception of Law and analysed various developments in the Church where the Old Testament Law is really given another place in the gentile Church than it occupies in Paul's theology. At present we can only state that Paul's attitude, though challenged by his adversaries, did not proceed from a conception imposed on him by the Judaists, but that his firm basis was God's revelation in Christ. Consequently he does not in the least feel perplexed in the question of Christian ethics, as though the Jews with their misunderstanding of the Law had prevented him from the use of this factor in the right sense, but he starts from a point which is doubtless solely adequate to his conception of Christ's significance for the life and the calling of the Christian.

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Gospel from any man but received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ, this does not mean that everything concerning Jesus was told him in a supernatural manner (cf. 1 Cor. 15,1 ff; 11,23 ff; see p. 64 ff). Paul's "Gospel" which is jeopardized in Galatia is justification by faith.

1) This issue is dealt with in § 21.5

The basic problem therefore - if we should deem it desirable to correct the Apostle in his ethical approach - is not whether we have a more comprehensive understanding of the Law, but whether we exceed Paul's knowledge of Christ and his insight in Christ's significance for the shaping of Christian life.

The main reasons then for taking our starting point in Paul's theology may be summarized as follows:

- Paul was convinced that Christ had chosen him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and history justifies this claim.
- The Apostles in Jerusalem did not question his special calling neither did they deem it necessary to add anything to the Gospel he was preaching.
- Paul had an extraordinary gift of apprehending the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. He did not teach anything new, but he drew out the essential lines from the witness of Christ's disciples (as later related in the Gospels).
- With an unequalled consistency he interpreted the things which had happened within the boundaries of Israel, translating them into the world of the Gentiles.
- Paul is the apostle who has reflected on the question of the function of the Old Testament Law most profoundly, because in his catechetical teaching to the Gentiles he could not wholeheartedly or halfheartedly follow an existing tradition, but had to lay a new foundation for his ethical instruction.



## 2. Summary of Paul's doctrine of the Law<sup>1</sup>.

### a) Paul's use of the word nomos.

In most cases Paul uses the word 'nomos' (law) as an equivalent to the Hebrew "Torah". According to the general use of the word among the Jews of his time, nomos can point to

- a) the commandments contained in the Pentateuch: Rom. 13,8 ff; 2,20 ff.
- b) the Pentateuch as a whole: Rom. 3,21b; Gal. 4,21.
- c) the whole of the Old Testament: Rom. 3,19; 1 Cor. 14,21.

Quite often the meaning is overlapping, as in Gal. 4,21. So the term law sometimes means only the Old Testament commandments (a), sometimes it includes the promises and historical parts of Pentateuch as well (b), and even the whole content of the Old Testament (c). If 'nomos' is used to denote the Old Testament commandments, i.e. what we usually call "the Law", there is never any basic distinction made between moral, ceremonial (ritual) and judicial Law<sup>2</sup>, with the thought of attributing to the moral commandments eternal validity. For Paul, the Law is the Law and exercises its authority either as a whole or not at all. It is advisable to write the word Law with a capital letter where it is used as a translation of 'nomos' in the sense of 'torah'.

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- 1) In this paragraph much use has been made of  
 Gutbrod, art. ~~nomos~~ in ThWNT IV p. 1016-1084  
 Bläser P., Das Gesetz bei Paulus, Münster i.W. 1941  
 Maurer Chr., Die Gesetzeslehre des Paulus, Zollikon-Zürich 1941  
 Kühl E., Stellung und Bedeutung des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes  
     im Zusammenhang der paulinischen Lehre, ThStKr 1894 p.120-146
  - 2) cf. Edm. Schlink, Gesetz und Paraklese, in 'Antwort', Zürich 1956,  
 p. 324: "Nomos oder 'o nomos, absolut gesetzt, ist der Inbegriff der  
 von Gott an Mose und durch Mose seinem Bundesvolk geoffenbarten Ge-  
 bote. Dabei unterscheidet Paulus nicht zwischen Zeremonial-  
 Judizial- und Moralgesetz, wenngleich er das letztere an den meisten  
 Stellen im Auge hat."  
 Similarly ThWNT IV p. 1063.39 ff; cf. Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p. 260.

Besides this general use of the word *nomos* we find a few instances where it has no relation to the Torah, but is used in a wider sense, corresponding to our law (written with a small letter). It can be translated by law, principle, order, determinating power. Instances of this use are: the marriage law<sup>1</sup>, the principle of wrongdoing<sup>2</sup>, the law in the members of the body which is at war with the law of the mind and subject to the law of sin<sup>3</sup>, the law of the Spirit<sup>4</sup>, the law of Christ<sup>5</sup>.

b) Origin and quality of the Law, its limitation to Israel.

For Paul there is no doubt that the Law is God's Law<sup>6</sup>, given to his people, and therefore it is called holy, just and good<sup>7</sup>. According to Gal. 3,19-20 the Law was promulgated through angels. This does not signify however that the Law was given outside God's will or only partly in accordance with it, nor that it had a quality inferior to the gifts coming directly from God<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless the promise which

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- 1) Rom. 7,2  
3) Rom. 7,23  
5) Gal. 6,2

- 2) Rom. 7,21  
4) Rom. 8,2

Some scholars notice a slight difference in emphasis when *nomos* is used with or without the article. Slaten A.W. (The qualitative use of *nomos* in the Pauline Epistles, AJTh XXIII 1919 p.213) makes the following distinction: If used with the article it has the distinct meaning: the Old Testament Law. Without the article the stress does not lie on the Law as such, but on its quality, its 'lowness'. But as Paul does not acknowledge a divine law revealed outside the Old Testament and apart from Israel, the "particular law in mind is usually the Mosaic Law or the Old Testament in general." The difference lies thus only in the emphasis, not in the Law referred to. Concerning this distinction see also E.D. Burton, Redemption from the curse of the Law, AJTh XI 1907 p.624 ff. According to others, however, the inclusion or omission of the article is due only to stylistic reasons.

- 6) Rom. 7,22.25; 8,7                      7) Rom. 7,13  
8) The haggada concerning the angels could be used to prove either the importance or the unimportance of the Law. see R.M. Grant, The Decalogue in Early Christianity, HThR XL/1 1947 p.1-17. In this case it seems that Paul intends to stress the inferiority of the Old Covenant as compared with the New one. see Stalder, Das Werk des Heiligen Geistes in der Heiligung bei Paulus, against Kittel ThWNT I p.82.30 ff. /Zürich 1962, p.322 ff. 329

was given before the Law and without mediation has priority over the Law.

The Law was revealed to Israel at Mount Sinai. Consequently it was not known by the patriarchs<sup>1</sup> and is unknown to the pagans. They do not possess the Law (νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες)<sup>2</sup>. It is not the Law that is said to be inscribed on their hearts, but the "work of the Law" (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου)<sup>3</sup>. The interpretation of this verse is very controversial, but it is not necessary here to go into the matter. At any rate Paul's statement of verse 14 (the pagans do not possess the Law) is not contradicted in verse 15.

According to some interpreters Paul here speaks of Christians in whom the prophecy of Jer. 31 has been fulfilled<sup>4</sup>. But even if we surmise that Paul refers to pagans outside the revelation<sup>5</sup> the Apostle is considerably at variance with the stoic conception of natural law. Perhaps Paul was influenced to some extent by the terminology of this philosophy<sup>6</sup>; nevertheless he does not say that the 'lex naturae' is inscribed in the human heart, but speaks about the 'work of the Law', i.e. that which is required by, or in accordance with the Law<sup>7</sup>.

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1) Gal. 3,17

2) Rom. 2,14

3) Rom. 2,15

4) e.g. Augustine, Karl Barth (most recently in 'Kurze Erklärung des Römerbriefs' München 1959<sup>2</sup>), F. Flückiger (Die Werke des Gesetzes bei den Heiden nach Rö. 2,14 ff; ThZ 1952 p. 17 ff).

5) e.g. W. Sanday/ A.C. Headlam, O. Michel, P. Althaus

6) so Althaus, Der Brief an die Römer NTD 1959 p. 22  
G. Bornkamm RGG<sup>3</sup> V p. 182

7) Sanday/Headlam, The Epistle to the Romans, 1958 p. 60;  
cf. Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Römer, 1957, p. 69: "Paulus vermeidet es, zu behaupten, dass das 'Gesetz' selbst den Heiden ins Herz geschrieben sei, er schwächt ab und meint, dass das Werk, das das Gesetz meint, wie ein Bild ihnen konkret vor Augen steht."

On this subject see further § 20,2-3.

c) The function of the Law.

In Judaism, the Law was considered more and more as a means of acquiring righteousness<sup>1</sup>. Paul repudiates this opinion on four grounds. The first one is basic.

1. Christological ground:

All are justified by God's free grace alone, through the death of Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>. This signifies that righteousness does not come by Law. If it comes by Law, then Christ died for nothing<sup>3</sup>. No compromise or middle way is possible.

2. Scriptural ground:

The Scripture says that nobody keeps the Law fully, which means that everybody is under God's curse<sup>4</sup>. According to Scripture, justification comes through faith and not through the Law<sup>5</sup>.

3. Historical ground:

Abraham who lived before the Law was given, was justified (by faith)<sup>6</sup>. The Covenant with its promises was given 430 years before the promulgation of the Law<sup>7</sup>. Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness before he was circumcised<sup>8</sup>.

4. On account of experience.

Man struggling under the Law is brought to despair<sup>9</sup>. The Christians

1) see § 7.5

3) Gal. 2,21

5) Gal. 3,11; Rom. 3,10-20

7) Gal. 3,17

9) Rom. 7,7-25. We cannot however consider this passage as a psychological autobiography of Paul concerning his time before his conversion. Only in the light of Christ does he realize what the state of natural man under the Law is like. "Das Kapitel drückt in der Tat nicht das empirische Selbstverständnis des Menschen unter dem Gesetz aus, sondern das nachträgliche Selbstverständnis des Christen hinsichtlich seiner Lage vor dem Glauben an Christus." P. Althaus, Paulus und Luther über den Menschen, Gütersloh 1938, p.31.

If we speak here of experience, it can be only in a limited sense.

"Die Darstellung der vorchristlichen Existenz durch Paulus ist

2) Rom. 3,24-25

4) Gal. 3,10-11

6) Gal. 3,6

8) Rom. 4,9-12

in Galatia have received the Spirit by believing the Gospel, not by keeping the Law<sup>1</sup>.

What is the function of the Law then according to Paul?

1. The Law forbids sin<sup>2</sup>.
2. In so doing it reveals sin<sup>3</sup>.
3. In consequence it condemns to death<sup>4</sup>.
4. It gives sin the opportunity to produce all kinds of wrong desires<sup>5</sup>.
5. As a result we have the paradoxical fact that the Law multiplies Law-breaking<sup>6</sup>.
6. Sin uses the Law to bring about death and so reveals its true character as sin<sup>7</sup>.

Far from justifying man, the Law multiplies sin. Therefore the state under the Law is the state of prisoners in the custody of Law<sup>8</sup>. The Law could only put man in prison and was unable to free him<sup>9</sup>, therefore it is experienced as a curse<sup>10</sup>.

Was there no 'positive' function of the Law? According to Paul, the positive function lies in its negative results: by revealing and multiplying sin it opens the way for God's grace<sup>11</sup>. We are not allowed however to interpret Paul's statements in the light of Luther's experience. As has already been mentioned, Rom 7,7 ff does not picture a psychological development in Paul's life. If we want to know how he thought and felt about himself before his conversion we have to turn to Phil. 3,4-6. The righteousness of the Pharisees was questioned only in their encounter with Jesus. In the same way Paul realized the negative function of the Law only after the risen Lord had met him on his way to Damascus. "Law brings only the consciousness of sin"<sup>12</sup>

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gemessen am empirischen Selbstverständnis des Juden ein abstraktes Zerrbild." Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 108. See also Goppelt's instructive confrontation of Rom. 7 with Gal. 3, op.cit. p. 109. Concerning Rom. 7 see further p. 89 and 95 of our thesis.

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|---|--------------------------|
| 1) Gal. 3,2                               | 2) Rom. 6,15; 7,7; 13,10 |
| 3) Rom. 7,7; 3,20                         | 4) 2 Cor. 3,5-7          |
| 5) Rom. 7,8-9; 1 Cor. 15,56               | 6) Rom. 5,20             |
| 8) Gal. 3,23-24                           | 9) Rom. 8,3              |
| 11) cf. O. Schulz, <i>ὁ νόμος ὁ νόμος</i> | 7) Rom. 7,13             |
| ThStKr 1902 p. 5ff, esp. p.41             | 10) Gal. 3,10            |
| 12) Rom. 3,20                             |                          |

is in its deepest sense a theological and not an experimental statement, made in the light of Christ's revelation. Considered in its context, the stress lies on what the Law is not able to do (justify), not on what it actually does (bring consciousness of sin).

d) The validity of the Law.

Because the Law works condemnation and not salvation, it is neither the first nor the last word of God. The covenant with Abraham precedes the Law by 430 years<sup>1</sup>. The Law was added to make wrongdoing a legal offence. It was given at a certain point in Israel's history and was intended to be valid only for a certain time, i.e. till the arrival of the 'issue' promised to Abraham<sup>2</sup>.

With the coming of Christ the Law has lost its function. It was a tutor in charge of us (= the Jews) until Christ should come<sup>3</sup>. Now he has come, the tutor's charge is at an end<sup>4</sup>. In other words: before the coming of Christ we were like slaves, subject to the elemental spirits of the universe, but when the term was completed, God sent his son to redeem those who were under the Law<sup>5</sup>. So the time of the Law is limited by Mount Sinai and Calvary<sup>6</sup>.

The right understanding of this statement excludes the interpretation

- a) that the Law, like an able schoolmaster, develops man's faculties and finally leads him to Christ
- b) that the Law after the coming of Christ goes on to fulfil its function as a tutor.

The Law is reckoned under the "elements of the world" (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου)<sup>7</sup>. It is clear from the context that Paul - compared with the new state as sons of God - considers his former state under the Law

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1) Gal. 3,17

2) Gal. 3,19

3) Gal. 3,24

4) Gal. 3,25

5) Gal. 4,3-5

6) see W. Grundmann, Gesetz, Rechtfertigung und Mystik bei Paulus ZNW 1933 p. 58 f.

7) Gal. 4,3.9.



as similar to that of the Galatians who lived in bondage to false Gods. Both are referred to as enslavement under the elements of the world<sup>1</sup>. The Law belongs thus to this world, i.e. to a certain people and a certain period in its history.<sup>2</sup> To subject oneself to the Old Testament, after Christ has come, means nothing else than to "turn back to the mean and beggarly spirits of the elements"<sup>2</sup>.

The same conception (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) appears in Col. 2,8.20. Probably Paul here refers to some judaistic gnosticism, but principally he makes no difference between this philosophy, the state under the Law and pure paganism. Whoever died with Christ and is raised to life with him<sup>3</sup> has to aspire to the realm above and leave behind the things of the world.

1) "Jews and Gentiles are... classed together as being before the coming of Christ in the childhood of the race, and in bondage, and the knowledge of religion which the Jews possessed in the law is classed with that which the Gentiles possessed without it under the common title 'the elements of the world'." Burton, Galatians, 1921 p. 216.

"Der Apostel versteht... die vorchristliche Situation der heidnischen Galater und die der Juden in gleicher Weise als Dienst an den elementaren Kräften des Kosmos." H. Schlier, Galaterbrief, 1949 p.135.

"Paulus vollzieht die Gleichsetzung von Thoradienst und Elementendienst, von jüdischem und heidnischem 'Nomos', von Judentum und Heidentum. Hier liegt das jüdische Religionssystem völlig zertrümmert vor uns." H. Windisch, Paulus und das Judentum, 1935, p.27.

About the meaning of στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου see M. Dibelius, Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus, esp. p. 77 ff and 227 ff, further A. Oepke, Galaterbrief, 1957, p. 93 ff.

2) Gal. 4,9

W. Lütgert's interpretation of this passage is very questionable. According to him part of the Galatian congregation were on the point of returning to their old religion which is considered as subjecting themselves under the Law, because the pagans as well as the Jews stand under God's Law. (Gesetz und Geist, Gütersloh 1919, p. 78 ff).

3) Col. 2,20; 3,1.

At first sight it seems perplexing that the Jewish religion should be equated with the pagan religions. It is probable that Paul saw a parallel between the pagan's worship of celestial bodies<sup>1</sup> and the dependence of the Jewish calendar on those bodies. But there is another suggestion which goes deeper: the term 'stoicheia' is in close connexion with the conception of the two ages.

e) The vanishing age and the coming age<sup>2</sup>.

With Christ's death and resurrection a new age has begun<sup>3</sup>, and by his sacrifice he has rescued us "out of this present age (αἰών) of wickedness"<sup>4</sup>. The Spirit is given to us as "a pledge of what is to come"<sup>5</sup>, i.e. the revelation of the coming age<sup>6</sup>. This distinction between the two ages has a temporal as well as a spatial aspect<sup>7</sup>: Christ's deed has established the new age<sup>8</sup> and virtually terminated the old one, though the latter is still going on (rather like an old watch which is doomed

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- 1) Dibelius, op.cit. p. 83 f.      2) ib. p. 64 ff; p.84  
 3) G. Bornkamm, (Die Offenbarung des Zornes Gottes, in 'Das Ende des Gesetzes') has drawn our attention to the significant adverb ὅν in Paul's epistles. cf. p. 32: "Dieses ὅν, mit dem Paulus immer wieder die Antithesen der Verlorenheit und der Rettung markiert (vgl. Röm. 3,21.26; 5,9; 6,22; 8,1; 2 Kor. 5,16; 6,2 u.a.), ist das heilsgeschichtliche, eschatologische Jetzt, das der Menschheitsgeschichte unter dem νόμος ein Ende setzt (1. Kor. 7,29; 10,11; Röm. 13,11 u.a.) und einen neuen Aeon heraufführt."  
 4) Gal. 1,4      5) 2 Cor. 1,22      6) cf. Rom. 8 p. 247 ff.  
 7) K. Stalder, 'Das Werk des Heiligen Geistes in der Heiligung bei Paulus', stresses that the New Testament considers the 'aions' primarily as qualitative-dynamic values, though he does not deny that we have to do with two different periods as well. cf. p.250: "Unser bisheriges Ergebnis besteht also darin, dass "Aeon" nicht primär eine Zeitperiode meint, sondern eine qualitativ-dynamische Grösse."  
 8) The term πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου (τῶν καιρῶν) (Gal.4,4; Eph. 1,10) is significant. cf. H.D. Wendland, Geschichtsanschauung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im Neuen Testament, Göttingen 1938, p.30: "Das Geschichtsbild wird einfach und klar. Alle Gedanken gehen aus von dem organisierenden Mittelpunkt des πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν... Adam und Christus stehen einander als die Repräsentanten der alten und der neuen Weltzeit gegenüber, wie Sünde und Gerechtigkeit, Tod und Leben."

to stand still at a certain moment because it is not wound up any more)<sup>1</sup>.

But as the new age is real only in Christ, it is still in heaven, thus localised above, though the Spirit gives certainty to the faithful that they actually belong to the coming age. By their baptism they have already died to this world and are made alive in the new world, but their life is still hidden with Christ<sup>2</sup>. "You died; and now your life lies hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory"<sup>3</sup>.

It would lead too far if we should investigate this view of the two ages in all its aspects. But it appears that many exhortations in the Epistles can only be understood properly with this distinction of the two ages in mind. Various other antithetical conceptions are in direct relation to the "two ages". This becomes still clearer if we realize that "this world" (ὁ κόσμος οὗτος) is often used as synonymous to "this age" (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος). Without claiming completeness we can relate the following terms to the respective 'ages':

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- 1) "The form of this world is passing away" 1 Cor. 7,31.  
Wendland, op.cit. p. 26 uses the terms "Heilszeit" and "Weltzeit":  
"So sind also seit dem Kommen Jesu Christi Heilszeit und Weltzeit zusammen da; denn das Heil ist in die Weltzeit eingedrungen, ohne dieser sogleich das endgültige Telos zu bereiten."
  - 2) "Durch das in der Taufe gegebene Mitsterben und Mitauferstehen mit Christus ist der Christ hinein versetzt in den ἐν Χριστῷ vorhandenen, noch verborgenen Aeon, wirkt sich an ihm der Vollzug des eschatologischen Geschehens der Lebensherrschaft aus."  
W. Grundmann, Gesetz, Rechtfertigung und Mystik bei Paulus,  
ZNW 1933 p. 61-62.
  - 3) Col. 3,3-4. Man is already the new creature. cf. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus, in: Glauben und Verstehen I 1933 p.210: Paulus lernte sich verstehen "als neue κτίσις, also zum neuen Aeon gehörig! Christus ist ja der neue Adam, der Erstgeborene unter vielen Brüdern. Wer zu ihm gehört, der gehört zur neuen Welt, der hat den Geist, die Sohnschaft, der ist gerecht, verherrlicht, heilig."
  - 4) cf. 1 Cor. 1,20; 2,6.12; 3,18.19 and the pleonasm of Eph. 2,2.

<u>present age</u>	<u>coming age</u>	
flesh	Spirit	Rom. 8,4.9.12
works of the flesh	fruit of the Spirit	Gal. 5,19-22
Law	Spirit	Gal. 5,18
spirit of slavery	spirit that makes us sons	Rom. 8,15
wrath	grace	Eph. 2,3.7
death	life	Rom. 8,6
corruption	eternal life	Gal. 6,8
wisdom of this world	God's wisdom	1 Cor. 1-2
the things that are on earth	the things that are above	Col. 3,1-2

Because "this age" (this world) is vanishing and the "new age" is coming, Christians are exhorted not to "live according to the flesh"<sup>1</sup>, but to "walk by the Spirit"<sup>2</sup>, to "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth"<sup>3</sup>, not to be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind"<sup>4</sup> etc.

From this point of view, i.e. these two opposite worlds or ages, the difference between the Jewish religion and the religions of the Gentiles is relativized, they all belong to the vanishing age. In the old age there were Jews and Gentiles, but Christ has created a "new man"<sup>5</sup>, and therefore to go back to the old religion, whether it be pure Jewish or pure pagan or a mixture of both means to fall back into the old age, to fall into bondage again and lose Christ.

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1) Rom. 8,12-13

2) Gal. 5,16.25

3) Col. 3,2

4) Rom. 12,2. Note the striking parallel in terms between this passage and 1 Cor. 7,31: "μή συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ" because the "σχῆμα of this world is passing away".

5) Eph. 2,15

Against this background it is impossible to interpret Rom. 7,7 ff as the state of the Christian<sup>1</sup>. The parable in the verses 1-5 and the conclusions in v. 6 declare unmistakably what Paul thought of the state of a Christian: "Now, having died to that which held us bound (= the Law), we are discharged from the Law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the spirit, in contrast to the old way, the way of a written code."

In baptism, man not only dies to sin<sup>2</sup>, but also to the Law<sup>3</sup>. Occasionally Paul goes still farther and explains, "Christ annulled the Law with its rules and regulations"<sup>4</sup>. In this passage the Law appears as a dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, as enmity which has to be destroyed in order to give place to peace and to create the "new man". With the term 'dogmata' Paul stresses the Law in its demanding character, which raises sin and condemns man. Paul's statement does not permit the conclusion that he speaks about the Law only as far as it was misunderstood as a means of justification, neither is there any suggestion that the Law would be abolished only in a certain respect, or that only a misunderstanding of the Law had disappeared.

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- 1) See the important study by  
 W.G. Kümmel, Römer 7 und die Bekehrung des Paulus, Leipzig 1929,  
 further  
 G. Bornkamm, Sünde, Gesetz und Tod, in 'Das Ende des Gesetzes'  
 p.58: summary of the reasons against the 'biographic  
 interpretation', and  
 p. 67-69 his conclusions  
 R. Bultmann, Römer 7 und die Anthropologie des Paulus, in 'Imago  
 Dei', Festschrift f. G. Krüger, 1932  
 do. Theologie des Neuen Testaments p. 267  
 P. Althaus, Paulus und Luther über den Menschen, Gütersloh 1938  
 Th. Schlatter, Für Gott lebendig in Christi Kraft, in Jahrbuch der  
 Theol. Schule Bethel 1930, esp. p. 137,  
 do. Tot für die Sünde, lebendig für Gott, in do.1932, p.36ff  
 cf. commentaries by P. Althaus, O. Michel, K. Barth, Sanday/Headlam.
- 2) Rom. 6  
 3) Rom. 7,1-6; Gal. 2,19  
 4) Eph. 2,15

A similar thought is found in Col. 2,13-14, though Paul here does not use the term 'nomos': "He has cancelled the bond which pledged us to the decrees of the law. It stood against us, but he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross." It is possible that the apostle here thinks especially of precepts of the ceremonial Law which are alluded to in v. 16 and 21.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he makes a sweeping statement about transgression and forgiveness and says that together with the bond the legal decrees are also nailed to the cross.

Promise and Law were parts of the vanishing age, the age of Adam, but they had a preparatory function for the coming age. The promise was given to Abraham and was valid until Christ, the Law was given through Moses and had also validity until Christ<sup>2</sup>. From the point of view of creation, the old age is represented by Adam, from the point of view of the Covenant by Abraham and Moses<sup>3</sup>.

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1) see M. Dibelius, An die Kol. Eph. Philem. 1953 p.32

2) see G. Schrenk, Die Geschichtsanschauung des Paulus auf dem Hintergrund seines Zeitalters, in Jahrbuch der Theol. Schule Bethel 1932 p. 77 ff, and  
Wendland, op.cit. p. 30: "Paulus sieht Abraham als den Träger der Verheissung und Moses als den Mittler des Gesetzes. Diese Gestalten stehen Christus gegenüber, aber sie sind auch zugleich auf ihn bezogen. Sie stehen in der alten Weltzeit, aber sie stellen die Gestalt des göttlichen Willens dar, die er in der Geduld angenommen hat. Denn Gott hält auch die alte Weltzeit in seiner Macht und hat sie hingeordnet auf die Erfüllung der Zeiten."

3) cf. Wendland, op.cit. p. 33: "Alle drei Linien, die durch die vorchristliche Menschheitsgeschichte gehen: die Linie der Schöpfung, die gefallen ist, der Verheissung und des Gesetzes münden und enden in demselben Christus, der Mitte und Wende der Geschichte ist."



f) The two Covenants.

The same notion that the Law is confined to a certain period and people is evident where Paul speaks about the two Covenants<sup>1</sup>. Jesus through his death has brought about the new Covenant<sup>2</sup> and thus fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah<sup>3</sup>. The two Covenants are confronted with each other in 2 Cor. 3:

<u>Old Covenant</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>
written Law <sup>4</sup>	Spirit
carved in letters on stone	written on tablets of human heart
condemns to death	gives life
dispensation of death	dispensation of Spirit
was to fade	is permanent
was accompanied by splendour, but now no splendour at all.	rich splendour.

Paul has been qualified by God to be a minister (diakonos) of a new Covenant, the Covenant of the Spirit. He does not deny that the old Covenant and its basic document, the Decalogue, was inaugurated with divine splendour, reflected on Moses' face. But "the splendour that once was is now no splendour at all; it is outshone by a splendour greater still."<sup>6</sup>

The old Covenant with its Law engraved upon stone (Decalogue!) was to fade<sup>7</sup>, but the new Covenant with the Spirit of freedom endures.

1) For the following see ThWNT II p.132 f.

2) 1 Cor. 11,25

3) Rom. 11,26-27

4) Concerning the opposition of 'gramma' and 'pneuma' see Schrenk, ThWNT I 765 ff.

"γράμμα" wird nicht gebraucht, wenn von der positiven, bleibenden Bedeutung der Schrift die Rede ist. Diese positive Aufgabe wird vielmehr immer geknüpft an γράφῃ. Ist vom γράμμα die Rede, so handelt es sich vielmehr stets um die veraltete gesetzliche Autorität. (ThWNT I 768.26 ff).

5) 2 Cor. 3,7

6) 2 Cor. 3,10

7) For the meaning of καταργέω see ThWNT I 453 f., esp. 454.29 ff.

g) Rom. 3,31 and 10,4.

Paul's statement in Rom. 3,31, often quoted with the intention to overthrow or at least relativize everything else he has said about the Law, has to be understood within Paul's train of thought in that chapter. After explaining that man is justified by faith, apart from works of Law, Paul puts the question, "Do we then overthrow the Law by this faith?" The answer is, "On the contrary, we uphold the Law" (νόμον ἱσχύομεν). This saying can be misleading if we separate it from the context.

In the whole of chapter 3 Paul points out that the Law does two things:

- a) the Law (here in the sense of: Old Testament as a whole, as the references are quotations from Psalms and Prophets!) declares that all men are under the power of sin<sup>1</sup>.
- b) Law and Prophets bear witness to the manifestation of God's righteousness apart from the Law<sup>2</sup>.

The witnessing of these facts according to Paul is the basic function of the Law (= the Old Testament), and when he stresses this in turn, he does of course uphold the Law (i.e. the message of the Old Testament).

It is very improbable that in his exposition of Rom. 3 about Law and sin on one hand, promise and justification on the other, Paul intends to say anything about God's Law (= the Commandments of the Old Testament) in relation to Christian life. We are not allowed to put a meaning into Paul's words which was absent from his mind. If we want to know how he thought about the Christian way of "fulfilling the Law" we must turn to Rom. 8,4 and 13,8-10.<sup>3</sup>

Even if we should understand 'Law' here in the sense of "commandments"<sup>4</sup>, it cannot possibly mean that Paul wants to "uphold the Law" as the norm

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1) v. 9-20

2) v. 21-22

3) see below p. 112 ff.

4) see Althaus, Gaugler, Barth. Unfortunately this verse is not as unequivocal as Barth wants it to be: "Er hat das Gesetz nach dem eindeutigen Wort Röm. 3,31 im Einklang mit Mt. 5,17 mit seiner Predigt nicht abschaffen, sondern aufrichten wollen." KD II/2 p. 269.

of life for the Church. This possibility is excluded by his own statements in the pertinent passages examined above. If Law here should be taken in the sense of "commandment" there are two possible interpretations:

- a) we uphold the Law, acknowledging God's radical demand of obedience to his concrete commandments, and by confessing that as nobody has kept the Law, nobody is justified by his deeds. To confess one's sin and accept God's grace and justification in Christ is nothing else than to confess one's failure in the keeping of the Law<sup>1</sup>.
- b) we uphold the Law, i.e. by accepting justification by faith we prove our obedience to God's will, and in the new life the commandment of the Law is fulfilled in us according to God's genuine intention<sup>2</sup>.

A similar problem of interpretation arises in Rom. 10,4: "Christ is the end (τέλος) of the Law". Barth interpretes 'telos' in the sense of the rabbinic 'kelal' and considers Christ as the aim, content and sum of all the precepts, or as the substance of the Law<sup>3</sup>. "To believe Christ means to obey God's Law"<sup>4</sup>. Gaugler<sup>5</sup> enters into discussion with Barth and repudiates this interpretation, especially on the basis of Paul's conception of history<sup>6</sup>. O. Michel<sup>7</sup> stresses the fact that 'telos' designates the termination of a historical process. Similarly, 'telos' is translated as "end" by Althaus and Sanday/Headlam<sup>8</sup>.

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1) Rom. 3,24-26

2) Rom. 8,4

3) KD II/2 p. 269 and Römerbrief (1959) p. 154

4) Römerbrief (1959) p. 154

5) E. Gaugler, Römerbrief 1952 II p. 95-118  
see also Stalder, op.cit. p. 353 ff.

6) E. Gaugler, Römerbrief 1952 II p. 98

7) Römerbrief 1957 p. 224 n.1

8) K. Benz (Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus, Freiburg i.B. 1912) considers this statement as consistent conclusion of Gal. 3,23-25 and Rom. 7,1-5: "War das Gesetz lediglich *ἡ παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστόν*" so legt sich die Konsequenz ohne weiteres nahe, dass Christus selbst das Ende des Gesetzes bedeutet." p.65.

If we connect Rom. 10,4 with Paul's other statements about the Law we are strongly pressed to translate 'telos' by 'end'. This interpretation does not of course suggest that the doing of God's will would be irrelevant after the coming of Christ, but obedience now takes another form. Christ has ended the period of the Old Testament Law, he has replaced the Torah, and hence God's will is done by living in the new reality created by Christ.

### 3. Paul's discussion with his opponents<sup>1</sup>.

#### a) Wavering pillars and false brethren.

We can understand Paul's position in relation to the Law best if we observe his attitude in his discussion with different groups. Our most valuable sources are of course Paul's epistles. The Acts of the Apostles may occasionally also be used, but they show a tendency to idealize the Church of Jerusalem and therefore try to smooth over the differences and tensions which arose between the Palestinian and the Hellenistic Christians. Though we do not know all the details of the different trends and their development, we can roughly distinguish four groups:

Judaists	James	Paul	Hellenistic Christians
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Each of these had a quite definite attitude towards the Old Testament Law. Peter must be considered as moving between James and Paul.

James, the brother of the Lord, who became the leader of the Church of Jerusalem after the death of James the disciple, stands for the group who believes in Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. Nevertheless this group which lives within the Jewish community has not loosened itself from the Jewish Law. James according to tradition, was blameless in keeping the Law. When Paul in a private interview with James, Peter and John had laid before them the (law-free) Gospel which

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1) see Carl Weizsäcker, Das apostolische Zeitalter der christlichen Kirche, Freiburg i.B. 1892<sup>2</sup>

he used to preach to the gentiles, they who were reputed to be pillars, added nothing to Paul's teaching. An agreement was made, confirmed by shaking hands, that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles, whereas the "pillars" should work among the circumcised. The only condition was, that Paul and his fellow workers should remember the poor in Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>.

Whether James stuck firmly to the standpoint he assumed at Paul's visit we do not know. Though Paul speaks in a respectful way about James, he does not seem to have got effective support from him in his fight against the Judaists. When in Jerusalem, he seems to have contended alone against the "false brethren"<sup>2</sup>, and in his epistle to the Galatians he does not use the argument that James formally condemned the judaistic movement. From his silence it might be inferred that James did not take a definite stand in this matter. It is possible that the above mentioned agreement came to pass as a result of Paul's powerful personality and convincing theology, but that later on the "pillars" were not able to keep free from Judaistic influence (see Peter in Antioch!).<sup>3</sup>

The Acts of the Apostles give a slightly different account of the so-called Apostolic Council, but Paul's presentation is probably closer to the facts as the Acts endeavour to smooth over the controversy between Paul and the party of Jerusalem<sup>4</sup>.

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1) Gal. 2,1-10

2) Gal. 2,4-5

3) Joh. Munck, Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte, Kopenhagen 1954, wants to prove that James did not differ from Paul, but it seems that this theory is not accepted by most of the NT scholars, cf. e.g. E. Haenchen, Die Apostelgeschichte, Göttingen 1959: "Jakobus hat, wie der Zwischenfall von Antiochia beweist, eine Mahlgemeinschaft der Heidenchristen und Judenchristen für unzulässig gehalten und sich damit als gesetzestrenger Jude bewährt, der sich für den Verkehr mit Nichtjuden, auch wenn sie Heidenchristen waren, nach wie vor durch das väterliche Gesetz gebunden wusste." p. 413.

4) see below p.106 ff

We thus consider James as the leader of the group who confesses Jesus Christ as Saviour of Jews and Gentiles, and consequently does not attribute to the Old Testament Law a redemptive function. Nevertheless they keep the Law as an expression of their obedience to God's will. The different opinions as to how far and in what sense the commandments should be kept are reflected in the Gospel according to Matthew.

There arose however another party within the Church of Jerusalem which may be called the Judaists<sup>1</sup>. Luke calls it "the party of the Pharisees"<sup>2</sup>, Paul speaks of "false Brethren"<sup>3</sup>. They held that the keeping of the Old Testament Law (or part of it?) was the absolute condition for salvation and that consequently the Gentiles joining the Church had to be circumcised and obliged to keep the Law of Moses. Their teaching was repudiated at the Council of Jerusalem, but nevertheless they did not change their minds and did not submit to the agreement of the Apostles concerning the division of the "missionfield". Paul's epistle to the Galatians results from their breaking into this congregation and troubling it, preaching circumcision and perverting the Gospel of Christ. The Hellenistic congregations founded by Paul were law-free, i.e. not obliged to keep any Old Testament commandments. In baptism the believers died and rose with Christ, living henceforth in a new life of freedom, only guided by the Spirit, and through love "fulfilling the Law" without being put under the Old Testament precepts. To put oneself under the Law would mean to be severed from Christ and to have fallen away from grace<sup>4</sup>.

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1) Munck, op.cit. p. 79 ff; 122 ff; 274, contends that the Judaists whom Paul opposes in his Epistle to the Galatians are of Gentile origin. Their location in Jerusalem (Acts 15,1 and 6) according to Munck is a projection from a later time; see p. 240-241 and 226: "Es ist... wahrscheinlich, dass Lukas diese bei den Heidenchristen umherreisenden Judaisten von dem paulinischen Missionsgebiet nach Jerusalem verlegt, indem er alles, soweit möglich, um die christlichen Zentren sammelt." Haenchen, op.cit. p. 393 n.2 calls this view "höchst unwahrscheinlich".

2) Acts 15,5

3) Gal. 2,4

4) Gal. 5,4



Paul himself stood of course on the side of the Hellenistic congregations he had founded. He has written off his legal rectitude and his former life under the Law because of Christ<sup>1</sup>. He is no longer under the Law<sup>2</sup>. To win those outside the Law he has become as one outside the Law<sup>3</sup>. There were however occasions when he submitted himself to the Law: "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; as they are subject to the Law of Moses, I put myself under that Law to win them although I am not myself subject to it. All this I do for the sake of the Gospel"<sup>4</sup>. In order to save men Paul could submit himself to any custom, whether pagan or Jewish. He was able to put himself on occasions under the Law of Moses, because this Law actually meant nothing to him and did not influence in any way his relation to Christ.

The incident in Antioch<sup>5</sup> shows that the agreement of Jerusalem became problematic as soon as people from the Palestinian Church came into communion with Hellenistic Christians. Peter first took the attitude of Paul, i.e. he ate with the gentile Christians and thus became "as one outside the Law". But when some persons came from James he became afraid and separated himself from the gentile Christians, his example being imitated by Barnabas and the Jewish-Christian part of the congregation. Paul rebukes him before the whole congregation. What had happened?

Peter's sudden submission to the Law of Moses had not been for the sake of the Gospel (to win Jews), but he had denied the Gospel, he had broken the unity of Christ's body. First Peter, encouraged by the example of Paul, had lived like a Gentile, acknowledging that Christ "has broken down the dividing wall and annulled the Law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace"<sup>6</sup>. But later on Peter, out of fear,

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1) Phil. 3,5 ff.

3) 1 Cor. 9,21

5) Gal. 2,11 ff

2) 1 Cor. 9,20

4) 1 Cor. 9,20.23

6) Eph. 2,15

rebuilt the dividing wall, recreating two humanities and destroying the peace wrought by Christ<sup>1</sup>. If the Law is not relevant any more (as demonstrated by Peter's former attitude) why then does Peter compel the gentile Christians to live like Jews (by proceeding to the observance of the Law, which became consequently a condition to be fulfilled by the gentile Christians if they wanted to be restored to communion)?

We are not told what was the result of this incident. The only one not affected by it was Paul. Jerusalem had to reconsider whether the keeping of the Mosaic Law was under any circumstances the adequate expression of obedience to the Lord. The Jewish Christians in the congregation of Antioch (and anywhere else) had to decide whether they, like Paul, absolutely trusted in Christ, or whether they would still give the Law a place between them and God. The gentile Christians must have been shaken in their conviction that "we are justified by grace alone". It is possible that the so-called apostolic decree<sup>2</sup> was the result of the happenings in Antioch<sup>3</sup>.

#### b) Law-free or lawless?

Paul's attitude towards the Mosaic Law has become plain. Paul himself is not subject to the Mosaic Law, he has died to the Law and lives for Christ<sup>4</sup>. Justification comes through faith in Christ<sup>5</sup>, therefore putting up the Law again means that faith is not enough, Christ's sacrifice and love are not sufficient to salvation. "If righteousness comes by Law, then Christ died for nothing"<sup>6</sup>. Paul does not criticize those who live among the Jews for observing the Jewish Law (he himself does so occasionally) provided it is a matter of custom and not a

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1) "Das Gesetz wieder aufrichten heisst sich als *παράβασις* erweisen, alles das wieder rückgängig machen, was Christus gebracht hat." W. Mundle, Zur Auslegung von Gal. 2,17-18. ZNW 1924 p. 152 f.

2) Acts 15,20

3) Luke's connecting it historically with the Council of Jerusalem is not convincing, see below p. 107 f.

4) Gal. 2,19-20

5) Gal. 2,16

6) Gal. 2,21

question of justification. But as soon as Jewish Christians come into communion with gentile Christians, freedom in Christ must have pre-eminence over against observing the Law.

There is still one point Paul now and then refers to which has to be considered here. Some people obviously misunderstood Paul's teaching about absolute freedom from the Law. This misunderstanding could arise outside as well as inside the Church. If Paul says that he is free from the Law, is he then lawless? This is the question from outside the Hellenistic congregation. If he says that the Christians are called to freedom, does it mean that they are free to do whatever they like? This question is latent within the Church.

Paul's answer is very definite:

"I am not in truth outside God's Law (*ἀνομος θεοῦ*),  
but under the law of Christ (*ἐννομος χριστοῦ*)<sup>1</sup>.

It is important here to notice that Paul neither points to any Mosaic commandment as an open or secret guide, nor explains that the "moral Law" of the Old Testament is the standard of Christian life. Nevertheless Law-free does not mean lawless. Between doing anything you like (and thus being a libertine) and subjecting yourself to the Old Testament Law (and so becoming a Judaist) there is the new way, the only possible way for Christians: to be 'ennomos Christou', i.e. to stand and live in and under the risen Lord himself<sup>2</sup>. The manner in which this takes place is expanded largely in the exhortatory sections of Paul's epistles.

1) 1 Cor. 9,21

2) see C.H. Dodd, *ENNOMOS XPISTOU* in *Studia Paulina in Honorem*  
J. de Zwaan, Haarlem 1953 p. 96 - 110

cf. W. Brandt, *Das Gesetz Israels und die Gesetze der Heiden*, München 1936<sup>2</sup>: "Dieses Gesetz der Bibel ist abgetan durch eine Gottestat, die seinen eigentlichen Sinn herausstellt, d.h.: Diese Freiheit vom Gesetz bedeutet immer Bindung an Christus. Man wird nie in die Willkür hinein befreit, sondern immer in die Knechtschaft Jesu Christi." p.30.

The question whether grace allows or even encourages sin is denied emphatically in Rom. 6,2. To be baptized means not only to have died to the Law, but through union with Christ also to have died to sin<sup>1</sup>. In 6,15 the same question is answered with the argument that the Roman Christians have become obedient to the standard of teaching (εὐπας διδασχῆς) and are now slaves of righteousness<sup>2</sup>, i.e. slaves of God<sup>3</sup>.

### c) The Apostolic Decree.

Concerning the Apostolic Decree<sup>4</sup> and its relation to Gal. 2,1-10 there exist quite divergent views among the New Testament scholars. The two main groups may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Acts ch. 15 and Gal. 2,1-10 describe the same meeting, the so-called Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem. The differences with regard to several points are due to the different view-points of the reporters. Paul speaks from his personal standpoint, whereas the reporter of the second generation finds edification in the ideal picture of the unity of the church leaders<sup>5</sup>. The most striking difference is of course Paul's silence about the Apostolic Decree, which according to Acts 15 was the climax of the whole Synod. Paul however in Gal.2,6 expressly states that nothing was added to the Gospel which he used to preach. We have thus to conclude that Paul considered the Decree as not obligatory for him. It is assumed that the somewhat complicated sentence of Gal. 2,6 pictures the Apostle's excitement when remembering the enactment of the Decree, with which he was not in agreement<sup>6</sup> or that the emphasized pronoun "to me nothing was added" reveals his knowledge of a decree which was actually applicable to

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1) Rom. 7,4; 6,3-11.

2) Rom. 6,18

3) Rom. 6,23

4) Acts 15,20.28-29; 21,25

5) A. Oepke, Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater, Berlin 1960, p.52 cf. O.Linton, The third aspect, A neglected point of view, A study in Gal. 1-2 and Acts 9 and 15 (Studia Theologica 1950 p.79-95). "The author of Acts belonged, he too, to those Christians who wanted to correct Paul slightly in order to make him better. In the first place Paul, therefore, is described as more conciliatory than he really was." (p.95)

6) Oepke, Galaterbrief, p. 54

others<sup>1</sup>. As a matter of fact the Decree was addressed to the Church of Antioch and her daughter Churches<sup>2</sup> and did not apply to the Churches still to be founded by Paul<sup>3</sup>.

2) The second group holds that the Apostolic Decree is not a product of the Apostolic Council reported in Gal. 2,1-10 and Acts 15, but that the author of Acts combined a Decree, known in his time in a certain area, with this event, possibly in order to crown the Council with a satisfactory settlement<sup>4</sup>. This assumption rests mainly on the following reflections:

- a) Paul stresses in Gal. 2,6 that "those who were reputed to be something", after having listened to the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, added nothing to it.
- b) The Decree is sent to the brothers of Gentile origin in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, thus confined to a certain area<sup>5</sup>.
- c) When Paul after his third journey comes to Jerusalem he is told about the Decree as if he had not known anything about it beforehand<sup>6</sup>.

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1) H. Schlier, Der Galaterbrief, Göttingen 1949, p. 77

2) Acts 15,23

3) Oepke, op.cit. p. 54

4) so lately H. Lietzmann, Der Sinn des Aposteldekrets und seine Textwandlung, in Kl. Schriften II Berlin 1958, p. 292 ff,

M. Dibelius, Das Apostelkonzil, in Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte, Göttingen 1957, p. 84 ff

L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum im 1. und 2. Jh., Gütersloh 1954, p. 96 note 1,

H.W. Beyer, Die Apostelgeschichte, 1951, NTD

E. Haenchen, Die Apostelgeschichte, Göttingen 1959

G. Bornkamm in RGG<sup>3</sup> V p. 172

for further references see Haenchen, op.cit. p. 410

H. Waitz, Das Problem des sog. Aposteldekrets, in ZKG 1936 p. 246 ff is of the opinion that the Decree was enacted after a discussion in Jerusalem, caused by Peter's visit in the house of Cornelius.

5) but cf. 15,19 and 16,4 where there is no suggestion of such a limitation.

6) Acts 21,25. According to Haenchen, op.cit. p. 393 and 412, this is only a reminder for the reader.

- d) Paul's discussion of the question of meat which has been offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8-10 does not reveal any knowledge of the Decree and his advice is not in agreement with it.
- e) It is difficult to understand how an argument such as described in Gal. 2,11 ff could happen after the Decree had been drafted<sup>1</sup>.
- f) Our primary source for the Apostolic Council is Paul's account in Gal. 2, whereas the Acts are composed from a literary-theological point of view and reflect a later situation in Church history<sup>2</sup>.

As a matter of fact it seems quite probable that the enactment of the Decree was caused by difficulties which arose when Christians from the Jews and Gentiles had common meals - perhaps the Lord's Supper - as was the case in Antioch.

The Apostolic Decree asked the Christians of Gentile origin to abstain from four things: "You are to abstain 1) from meat that has been offered to idols, 2) from blood, 3) from anything that has been strangled, 4) and from fornication". On closer examination however the items 1-3 turn out to be three different expressions of one and the same thing, i.e. not to eat meat from a Gentile butcher because it was not slaughtered according to Jewish ritual which meant that it contained blood and was in all probability dedicated to some deity<sup>3</sup>. The term 'fornication' seems to refer to marriage within degrees of relationship which were prohibited by the Jewish law<sup>4</sup>. Other interpreters are of the opinion that the first prohibition (abstinence from meat that has been offered

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- 1) Joh. Munck, op.cit. p. 94 is however of the opinion that the discussion of the events in Gal.2 does not follow the chronological order.
  - 2) see Dibelius, op.cit. Haenchen RGG I<sup>3</sup> p. 501 ff, Munck, op.cit. p. 71 ff.
  - 3) see H.W. Beyer, op.cit. p. 95; Hans Lietzmann, op.cit.; O. Bauernfeind, Die Apostelgeschichte, Leipzig 1939, p. 197.
  - 4) cf. Haenchen, op.cit. p. 390: " 'Hurerei' meint hier Heiraten in verbotenen Verwandtschaftsgraden, welche die Rabbinen als 'wegen Unzucht verboten' bezeichnet haben".



to idols) concerns the participation in idol-offerings. Haenchen points to the fact that the four items contained in the Decree are prohibited one by one in the Holiness Code, not only to the Israelites, but also to the strangers sojourning among them:

Lev. 17,8		prohibition of offering to idols
17,10 ff	"	of eating of blood
17,13	"	of strangled beasts
18,6 ff	"	of marriage within certain degrees

If the Decree really refers to this Code it can be understood as a guide for the Gentile Christians how to respect the feelings of the Jews<sup>1</sup>. This understanding of the Decree would allow a plausible interpretation of James' motives in Acts 15,21. As Moses has never lacked spokesmen in every town for generations past, the requirements for Gentiles who want to communicate with Jews are known everywhere.

Another interpretation relates the items of the Decree to the Noachian precepts. There is of course a relationship with precepts 5 and 7 of that Code, but it is not clear why only these two points should have been chosen.

For a proper evaluation of the significance of the Decree we have to compare it with the requirement of "certain persons from Judea"<sup>2</sup> and the "Pharisaic party"<sup>3</sup> who said: "They must be circumcised and told to keep the Law of Moses." This demand is repudiated completely by Peter as well as by James<sup>4</sup>. The Decree is thus not considered as a yoke or

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1) cf. Haenchen, p. 411: "Was diese 4 Verbote miteinander verbindet und von allen "rituellen" Forderungen des "Moses" unterscheidet, ist... der Umstand, dass sie, und nur sie, nicht bloss den Juden gegeben sind, sondern auch den Heiden, die unter den Juden wohnen. Während sich das Gesetz sonst allein an die Juden wendet, legt es diese 4 Forderungen auch den Heiden auf."

Waitz, op.cit. p. 231: "Das Aposteldekret übernimmt die Bestimmung des jüdischen Ritualgesetzes über den Verkehr zwischen Israeliten und Beisassen und wendet sie auf den Verkehr zwischen Juden- und Heidenchristen an." see also L.Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p.96 n.1.

2) Acts 15,1

3) Acts 15,5

4) Acts 15,10.19

irksome restriction, but as acknowledgment of freedom from the Jewish Law. It does not oblige the Christians of Gentile origin to keep part of the Mosaic Law<sup>1</sup>.

In the second century the Decree was misunderstood - as if it intended to give the elementary moral law for Christians: abstention from worship of idols, from committing adultery and from killing. This moralistic interpretation is reflected in the texts D d Iren Cypr which do not mention the prohibition of the "strangled" but add the "Golden Rule". As it is more likely that the Decree had originally a ritual significance and was later changed into a moral law than the converse development, the majority of modern scholars keep to the "ritual" interpretation<sup>2</sup>.

Ad. Schlatter gives a somewhat confusing interpretation<sup>3</sup>. He distinguishes three points in the Decree, i.e. abstention a) from pagan offering meals, b) from intercourse with a harlot, c) from drinking blood or eating meat with blood in it. He rejects the idea that the Decree wanted to give a minimum ethic, because the proclamation of the freedom from the Law is based on the presupposition that, through unity with Christ, the separation from the world, the flesh, from sin and guilt has already become a reality. Schlatter criticizes the alterations in the western text<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand he nevertheless understands and

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- 1) "Im Sinne des Lukas sind also die 4 Forderungen keine Last: Der Beschluss des Apostelkonzils ist vielmehr die endgültige Anerkennung der gesetzesfreien Heidenmission und damit des gesetzesfreien Heidentums". Haenchen op.cit. p. 401; cf. 390 and 394 n.3.
  - 2) O. Bauernfeind, op.cit. p. 195: "Der W-Text ist, kurz gesagt, zu befriedigend, um wahr zu sein." He calls this text a "Erleichterungsvariante". cf. Haenchen op.cit. p. 390 n.5. For a detailed exposition of the contrary opinion see G. Resch, Das Aposteldecret nach seiner ausserkanonischen Textgestalt, TU 28/2 Leipzig 1905.
  - 3) Geschichte der ersten Christenheit, Gütersloh 1926, p. 157 ff.
  - 4) "Die ganze Vorstellung, dass hier eine elementare moralische Gesetzgebung entworfen werde, die das unerlässliche Mindestmass der Sittlichkeit bestimme, lässt sich mit dem, was die Apostel taten, nicht vereinen... Diese Deutung des Beschlusses wusste nicht mehr, was in der apostolischen Kirche lebendig war." op.cit. p. 158.

interprets the Decree in a moral sense, only that it is turned against a gnostic libertinism<sup>1</sup>. It is not clear to what extent Schlatter wants to distinguish his own interpretation from that of the Western redaction. According to Haenchen<sup>2</sup> the transformation of the ritual into moral precepts in the Western text was part of the endeavour to eliminate tensions and contradictions in the Acts. By the change mentioned above the contradiction with Gal. 2 is removed and the result is a summary of Christian ethical teaching.

It seems however that the prohibition of eating blood and meat of strangled beasts was observed strictly in the 2nd century, though it was probably not understood any longer according to its original intention<sup>3</sup>.

#### d) Two misunderstandings.

We have to come back once more to the wide-spread theory that Paul declared all Christians free from the ceremonial Law, but subjected them to the moral Law of the Old Testament. It has already been stated that Paul never made this differentiation in the conception of Law. Consequently there is in all his epistles not the slightest suggestion that part of the Old Testament Law is still authoritative for Christian life. Christ is the end of the Law<sup>4</sup>, he has set it aside, nailing it to the cross<sup>5</sup>; he annulled the Law with its rules and regulations<sup>6</sup>. Paul would probably not have understood the question whether this statements applied to the whole Law or only to part of it, because for him

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1) "Gehört der Beschluss der Apostel neben die Worte des Paulus und des Johannes (1 Cor. 6,12; 10,23; Apoc. 2,14.20) die denselben Gegenstand besprachen, dann wurde in Jerusalem gesagt: die griechischen Gemeinden sind vom Gesetz frei; aber die gnostische Verkehrung der Freiheit darf bei ihnen nicht vorkommen". op.cit. p. 162

2) Haenchen, op.cit. p. 413

3) cf. Justin, Dial.c.Tryph. 34,8. Minucius F. 36,6; Eus.H.E. V 1,26; Tert. Apol. 9,13

4) Rom. 10,4

5) Col. 2,14

6) Eph. 2,15; see p. 90 ff.

the Law was an indivisible unity<sup>1</sup>.

Sometimes it is said that Paul declared the Old Testament Law to be ruled out as a means of justification, whereas it remained normative for Christian life. This opinion not only lacks any foundation in Paul's practice of ethical teaching, but it shows also a grave misunderstanding of his theology. His main concern is that the Law had never been intended to be a means of justification<sup>2</sup>. According to him this was the Jewish misunderstanding of the Law<sup>3</sup>. It cannot thus lose a function which was never attributed to it by God.

#### 4. The new approach in ethics.

##### a) Fulfilment of the Law through abrogation of it.

Paul does not deny that the Law was the expression and formulation of God's will, but it was directed to a certain people, living in a certain time, given to it for a certain purpose. In Jesus Christ this period of the Old Covenant came to an end, and now God speaks through his Son

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- 1) R. Grant (The Decalogue in Early Christianity) in his otherwise illuminating article fails to realize this important fact. He thinks he is discovering in the New Testament Epistles references to and paraphrases of the Ten Commandments and concludes: "We have seen that in the New Testament there is considerable justification for considering the Decalogue a higher form of Law than the local or national legislation of the rest of the Pentateuch". p.8.
  - 2) see p. 90 f. cf. K. Benz, Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus, p.66: "Wenn Paulus so allgemein vom Abtun des Gesetzes, vom Befreien und Loskaufen aus seiner Kenchtschaft redet, ja wenn er Christus schlechthin das Ende des Gesetzes nennt, so dürfen diese Aussprüche nicht dahin eingeschränkt werden, als sei das Gesetz nur als Heilsweg abgeschafft - was es an und für sich überhaupt nie war - sondern das Gesetz ist für den Christen auch als Lebensnorm ein für allemal abgetan." cf. Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p.264: "Er (Paulus) sagt nicht nur, dass der Mensch durch Gesetzeswerke nicht das Heil erlangen kann, sondern auch, dass er es gar nicht soll. So denkt Paulus von seinem Gottesbegriff aus, demzufolge das, was faktisch ist oder geschieht, zugleich nach göttlichem Plan so ist und geschieht." see also Stalder, op.cit. p. 267 ff.
  - 3) see Hans Windisch, Paulus und das Judentum, Stuttgart 1935, p.26.

in a universal way. "So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near by"<sup>1</sup>. This new reality for the hopeless and godless (atheists!)<sup>2</sup> was brought about by the "shedding of Christ's blood"<sup>3</sup>; and by the annulment of the Law he created the "new humanity in himself"<sup>4</sup>. This proclamation has no limits, either nationally<sup>5</sup> or geographically<sup>6</sup>.

There is of course no absolute discontinuity between the old and the new Covenants. They are linked together in Jesus Christ, and therefore the doing of God's will (or as the Jews used to say: the keeping of the Law) as it was intended in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament has one common ground, i.e. God's love as gift and demand. In Jesus Christ is revealed to us how God loves the world and how man is to love God and his neighbour. It is Jesus Christ therefore who becomes the source and standard for Christian life. He is the "Centre of History" (Mitte der Zeit), and not the revelation on Mount Sinai.

And so it happens that whoever is united with him, whoever is loved by him and loves in turn - fulfils the Law! "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law."<sup>7</sup>

We are actually faced with the paradoxical fact that the Law has to be abrogated in order to be fulfilled by the Christian<sup>8</sup>. It is obvious

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1) Eph. 2,17

2) Eph. 2,12

3) Eph. 2,13

4) Eph. 2,15

5) Gal. 3,28; Rom. 1,14

6) Rom. 15,19-21

7) Rom. 13,8-10; cf. Gal. 5,14

8) cf. W. Lütgert, Gesetz und Geist, Gütersloh 1919, p.17: "Der Vers Gal. 5,14 begründet, dass sich die Erfüllung des Gesetzes mit der Freiheit vom Gesetz wohl vereinigen lässt, nämlich durch die Liebe.



that "Law" here means the commandments of the Old Testament facing man from outside as "letter". This Law was experienced as a curse, because nobody kept all the commandments, nobody was able to fulfil the Law (according to its basic intention). It is significant that Paul never exhorts the faithful to "keep the Law" or "fulfil the Law". The Old Testament Law was the expression of God's will for the Jewish people<sup>1</sup>. The Christian has of course to "try to understand what the will of the Lord is"<sup>2</sup>, but the knowledge of God's will does not come basically through the Old Testament Law<sup>3</sup>.

Sie ist zur gleichen Zeit Freiheit und Erfüllung des Gesetzes."

This new situation can only be described adequately with a paradoxical sentence. Whether we choose the description given in the heading of this section or try to make it sound less provocative is of secondary importance. cf. K. Mittring, Gesetz und Evangelium im Neuen Testament, EvTh 1938 p.442: "Man kann es nur paradox sagen: indem das Gesetz aufgerichtet wird durch das Evangelium, wird es vom Evangelium gleichzeitig sich selbst einverleibt, zum Verschwinden gebracht, nicht in einem negativen, sondern in einem höchst positiven Sinne."

cf. P. Althaus, Gebot und Gesetz, p.28: "Durch das Evangelium ist das Gesetz abgetan, aber das Gebot in Kraft gesetzt."

- 1) cf. E.J. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ, p. 137: "No doubt St. Paul felt the term νόμος was unsatisfactory in relation to the Law of Christ because Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law not in a barely literal way, but had refashioned the Torah into the 'Way' of ἀγάπη."
- 2) Eph. 5,17; cf. Rom. 12,2.
- 3) We are of course at variance with Ad. Zahn, Das Gesetz Gottes nach der Lehre und Erfahrung des Apostels Paulus, Halle 1876, who contends that according to Paul the Old Testament Law has to be the rule for Christian life and that the will of God which has to be discerned (Rom. 12,2) is identical with the Law of Moses. op.cit. part I; see chapter 10: Das Gesetz die bleibende Norm des christlichen Wandels, p. 76-81. This chapter stands in a strange contradiction to other parts of Zahn's study, e.g. p. 68-73; 104-105.



If Paul in Rom 13 points to some commandments of the Decalogue he does so only by way of demonstration: through love God's will is really done, what was asked in the Old Testament is realized in the New Testament. The reference to the Decalogue has only a retrospective significance and is not intended as a principle. Paul can say  $a + b + c = x$  (i.e. the Old Testament commandments  $a+b+c$  are actually parts of love,  $x$ , they are summed up in love), but he could not reverse it:  $x = a + b + c$  (i.e. in order to know what love is we have to go back to the Old Testament Commandments). For Paul it is exclusively Christ who by his life and death, by his example and teaching tells us what love is. As far as we know it was Augustine who first consciously and on principle paved the way backwards from love to the Decalogue, thus introducing the practice of basing Christian ethics on the Old Testament Law instead of in Christ<sup>1</sup>.

#### b) The new reality.

It is amazing how little Paul makes use of the Old Testament in his epistles, except where he has to fight against judaistic influences (Gal. Cor.) or where he felt it necessary to treat the subject of justification in a fundamental way with the Jewish position in mind (Rom.). Harnack<sup>2</sup> has drawn our attention to the fact that in his epistles to the Thessalonians, Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians "the authority of the Old Testament is not referred to either in a direct or an indirect way"<sup>3</sup>. Though it may not be permissible to draw as far-reaching conclusions as Harnack does<sup>4</sup> it is obvious that Paul's starting-point in his teaching was not the Old Testament, but Christ.

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1) see § 13

2) Ad. Harnack, Das Alte Testament in den Paulinischen Briefen und in den Paulinischen Gemeinden, Sitzungsber. d. preuss. Akademie d. Wissensch. phil/hist. , Berlin, 1928.

3) op.cit. p. 125

4) cf. E.Earle Ellis, Paul's Use of the Old Testament, London 1957 p.30 ff

The core of the Gospel proclaimed by Paul is Christ crucified<sup>1</sup>. Jesus had not come to bring a new philosophy or to confront man with lofty ideals, but he created a new reality. Jesus came down from the highest place, from his equality with God, to the lowest spot on earth, the execution-place of criminals<sup>2</sup>. His death reveals God's love for the sinners<sup>3</sup>. Through Christ's deed the world is reconciled to God which implies total forgiveness<sup>4</sup>. Reconciliation with God instead of enmity, grace instead of condemnation, life instead of death, this is the new reality based on Christ's work who took sin and curse upon himself and died in order that we might become righteous and live.

This divine gift is offered to everybody, Jews and Gentiles alike. No conditions have to be fulfilled from the side of man. He can do nothing but receive it, i.e. believe, and then through baptism he partakes of this new reality. In Baptism his old life comes to an end, he dies with Christ, and a new life begins, a life in communion with the risen Lord.<sup>5</sup> So fundamental is the change in man's existence that only the most basic events in human experience, death and birth, can be adequate expressions to explain it. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come."<sup>6</sup>

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1) 1 Cor. 2,2

2) Phil. 2,6-8

3) Rom. 5,8

4) 2 Cor. 5,18-19

5) cf. H.v. Campenhausen, Die Begründung der kirchlichen Entscheidung beim Apostel Paulus, p.29: "Alles, was Paulus an bestimmter Ordnung und rechtlicher Regelung in der Gemeinde wünscht, fordert, und empfiehlt, soll als notwendiger Ausdruck, als Entfaltung und Bewährung dessen begriffen werden, was mit dem wesenhaften neuen Sein, mit der Wirklichkeit der Kirche und dem Christenstande jedes einzelnen Christen unmittelbar wirksam gegeben ist... Je nach dem Zusammenhang betont Paulus dabei vor allem die neue Gemeinschaft mit Christus, die Gliedschaft aller Christen in einem Leibe, die Führung durch den heiligen Geist oder die eindeutige Geschiedenheit von der Welt, ihren Götzen und Sünden."

6) 2 Cor. 5,17

It cannot be stressed enough that this new state is a fact beyond all comprehension, feeling and experience. As surely as Christ died we are dead to sin, as surely as he rose again we are alive to God. We cannot but hold with firm belief to what God has decided on our behalf. This is the meaning of Paul's indicatives: you are dead, you have been raised, you are righteous etc.

But it is through faith only that we know what we are in the eyes of God and thus really are. Our life is hidden with Christ in God and will only be manifested when Christ himself is manifested<sup>1</sup>. The fact that our life is hidden with Christ in God does not however imply that our life on earth is unaffected by this new reality. In baptism our master has changed. We are no longer slaves of sin, but have become servants of God<sup>2</sup>. "Therefore, as you once yielded your bodies to the service of impurity and lawlessness... so now you must yield them to the service of righteousness"<sup>3</sup>.

Our endeavour to be obedient does not result in a hopeless struggle, because the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, moves us, helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us<sup>4</sup>. The desires of the flesh are not extinct, the lower nature sets its desires against the Spirit. Therefore it is essential that we entrust ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit and let him direct our course<sup>5</sup>.

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1) Col. 3,3-4; cf. Eph. 2,6

2) For this point see S. Wibbing, Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament... p.127: "So gehört zum neuen Menschen, der die *καὶνὴ φύσις* ist, die neue Tat. Das Zueinander von neuem Sein und neuer Tat ist nicht zu trennen: Der Imperativ ist im Indikativ begründet, die ethische Forderung wurzelt im Sakrament. Aus der Voraussetzung des göttlichen Handelns in Jesus Christus kann der Christ seine Tat vollbringen. Sie ist in diesem Fall weder eine zufällige noch eine magisch-notwendige Folge des göttlichen Handelns, sondern sie ist die freie Tat des neuen Menschen und ist sowohl von einem perfektionistischen wie vor einem idealistischen Missverständnis bewahrt." cf. Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p. 334 f.

3) cf. Rom. 6,12-23

4) Rom. 8

5) Gal. 5,16-25

If we open ourselves to God's Spirit, his fruit will be experienced in our life<sup>1</sup>. Through the Spirit God's love has been poured into our hearts<sup>2</sup> and becomes the source of our love for our fellow-men. The Law was not able to bring about the righteousness which it demanded. But if we are directed by the Spirit, the commandment of the Law is fulfilled in us<sup>3</sup>.

c) Christ has taken the place of the Torah.

Paul never suggests that Christ has come in order to enable man to keep the Law<sup>4</sup>. The Law is not only partially abrogated (e.g. in its condemning function, but retaining its teaching office) nor is there merely part of the Law abrogated (e.g. ceremonial and judicial commandments), but Christ has totally replaced the Law. He has of course done away with the condemnation of the Law, but moreover he has replaced the teaching function of the Law by his example, his teaching and the guidance of the Spirit. He has certainly fulfilled and abrogated the ceremonial Law, but he supersedes also the moral Law because in him the divine revelation is superior to the revelation of the Old Testament.

In a word: Christ has replaced the Torah<sup>5</sup>. This is not only evident in Paul's approach in ethics, but also in New Testament Christology where the attributes connected with the Torah in Judaism are now related to Christ<sup>6</sup>. If Paul says that he is "ennomos Christou"<sup>7</sup> he means to

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1) Gal. 5,22

2) Rom. 5,5; cf. Eph. 3,17-19

3) Rom. 8,4

4) This is the interpretation of Augustine and Calvin, see § 13 and 17:  
Old Testament = Law without Spirit and thus killing,  
New Testament = Law with Spirit and thus giving life.

5) Nevertheless it would be misleading to call Jesus or his words the 'new Torah', as does W.D. Davies (Paul and rabbinic Judaism), see e.g. p.144: "When he (= Paul) used the phrase νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ he meant that the actual words of Jesus were for him a New Torah." Later on Davies acknowledges, "It is true that at no point in the Pauline Epistles is the recognition of Jesus as a New Torah made explicit in so many words." (p.148). He corrects his unsatisfactory definition by the assertion that "He Himself in toto was a full revelation of God and of His will for man." p.149

6) For particulars see Chr.A.Bugge, Das Gesetz und Christus nach der...

7) 1 Cor. 9,21

(see p. 119)

declare that Christ is the absolute and exclusive authority in his life, the Lord whom he obeys, the example which he imitates. In Gal. 6,2 he refers also to the law of Christ, and there it is obviously meant that Jesus' love and forgiveness has to be imitated in relation to the man who is overtaken in any trespass<sup>1</sup>. But we may also think of Jesus' saying about the great commandments. The commandment of love actually plays the central part in Paul's exhortations<sup>2</sup>. In Phil. 2,3 ff it is especially Christ's humility which becomes the example for Christians to imitate.

In the question of obedience, the faithful are not put under a law nor given a set of rules which they have to obey, but they are expected to place themselves totally at God's disposal: "Offer your very selves to Him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart"<sup>3</sup>. How can we know God's will for our life? Paul mentions two conditions in the following verse. First, we have to free ourselves from the pattern of this present world, not to adapt ourselves to its scheme<sup>4</sup>. Second we are to be transformed by the renewal of our mind, i.e. submit ourselves to the guiding, enlightening and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. If these conditions

Anschauung der ältesten Christengemeinde, ZNW 1903 p. 89-110.

Compare also the predicates attributed to the Torah by the Jews with John's testimony on the 'logos' Joh. 1. (Str.-B. II p.353 ff)

- 1) cf. Joh.Weiss, Paulus und Jesus, Berlin 1909, p.65: "Es ist bemerkenswert, dass Paulus das Vorbild Christi immer gerade da anruft, wo es sich um die Forderungen der Selbstverleugnung, des Verzichtes auf eignen Vorteil und ähnliche Worte handelt... Die selbstverleugnende Liebe ist keine Eigentümlichkeit des jüdischen Messias-Ideals, sondern etwas völlig Neues, Ueberraschendes, woran man vor der Erscheinung Jesu nicht gedacht hatte. Sie ist die eigentümliche Lebensleitung Jesu und der Kern seiner Verkündigung. Darum erscheint gerade sie als der Inhalt des 'Gesetzes' Christi."
- 2) Rom. 13,8-10; Gal. 5,14; Col. 3,14; cf. 1 Cor. 13.
- 3) Rom. 12,1
- 4) μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε



are fulfilled "you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable and perfect"<sup>1</sup>. The following exhortatory chapters are an example how Paul "in virtue of the gift that God in his grace has given" him<sup>2</sup> knows and is able to teach what is "good, acceptable and perfect".

It appears that Paul's exhortations in Rom. 12 (and elsewhere) partly remind us of sayings of Jesus, apocryphal and rabbinic material, and Old Testament passages<sup>3</sup>. This is not surprising, because Jesus too explained what it means to love one's neighbour<sup>4</sup>, and many Old Testament commandments are somehow interpretations or adaptations of the commandment of love. But Paul never suggests that the Christian for his knowledge in matters of behaviour is dependent on the Old Testament Law<sup>5</sup>. It is significant for Paul's view that he considers the events of Israel's history to be written as types (τύποι) in order to warn later generations including Christians<sup>6</sup>, but that he does not make a similar statement about the Old Testament Law.

We have already referred to 2 Cor. 3 where Paul compares the Old and the New Covenants. The Old Covenant is characterized by the written code on tablets of stone, which kills. The new Covenant is related to the Spirit, who gives life. How this killing by the written code

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1) Rom. 12,2

2) Rom. 12,3

3) about the latter see below p. 125

4) For the reason why Paul does not more frequently quote the sayings of Jesus see p. 166 f.

5) Gogarten's view that this discernment of God's will had to be practised in relation to the Old Testament Law is not in agreement with Paul's theology. cf. Fr. Gogarten, *Die Wirklichkeit des Glaubens*, Stuttgart 1957 p.74: "...so ist nun der Mensch Herr über das Gesetz geworden. Das bedeutet jedoch keineswegs, dass er willkürlich mit ihm umgehen könnte; wohl aber, dass er prüfen kann und soll, was in dem überlieferten Gesetz für ihn verbindlich ist."

Similarly O. Michel misunderstands Paul when he contends: "Letzten Endes bleibt das A.T. für ihn (= Paulus) eine Sammlung göttlicher Lebensnormen, die auch für den Christen gültig sind." (Paulus und seine Bibel, Gütersloh 1929, p. 158).

The same error is found in R. Wegner's article 'Das Gesetz in der missionarischen Verkündigung' EMM 1917 p. 1ff; see esp. p.9

6) 1 Cor. 10,1-10



happens is described in Rom. 7,7 ff. When Paul speaks about Christian life, the antagonists are never Law and flesh (σάρξ), but Spirit and flesh. In his struggle against sin man is no more killed, but the Spirit guides, assists, vivifies him and intercedes on his behalf.

This difference in ethical approach between Old and New Testament is also evident if we start from the question: What is sin? In the Old Testament, sin is transgression of the Law. Man does not ask about the motive or aim of the commandments (though this point comes into purview in prophetism), but he has to keep the commandments whatever they demand, because they are given by God. This thought is stressed very strongly in Judaism<sup>1</sup>.

Paul's "definition" of sin is found in Rom. 14,23: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin". This is said with relation to the "weak" in the congregation. Concerning the "strong" we might sum up Paul's exposition in Rom. 14 in the definition: whatever does not proceed from love is sin. Here too it is evident that Christian life is not shaped according to a written standard or code, but that it is based on faith and love, i.e. on our personal relationship with Christ and our understanding of his will.

As Christ in any case expects us "to walk in love", there may arise occasions where we have to sacrifice our freedom (which we have through faith) for the sake of a "weak brother"<sup>2</sup>. As a matter of fact for Paul sin cannot be defined theoretically. What is sin for one person is not so for another, and what is no sin in a certain circumstance may become sin if circumstances change. Faith (personal relationship to Christ) and love towards our fellow-men are the determinative factors for Christian life<sup>3</sup>. This does not imply however that beyond pointing to

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1) see § 7.5

2) Rom. 14

3) cf. E. Dinkler, Zum Problem der Ethik bei Paulus, Rechtsnahme und Rechtsverzicht ZThK 1952 p.184: "Es ergibt sich, dass keine aus der Sache selbst sich erhebende Ethik entworfen wird, sondern die ethische Entscheidung in der Begegnung des Christen mit dem Nächsten sich ergibt, weil hier die Selbstpreisgabe aus Liebe ihre konkrete Aufgabe erfährt."

these two factors we cannot make any statements as to how a Christian has to behave, otherwise there would be no place for exhortations in Paul's epistles.

#### d) The 'paraklesis'.

The notion of 'paraklesis' (παράκλησις, παρακαλεῖν) plays an important part in Paul's epistles. The term includes much more than is suggested by the usual translation "exhortation", namely entreaty, comfort, encouragement, appeal<sup>1</sup>. The faithful are encouraged to "teach and admonish one another in all wisdom"<sup>2</sup> and Paul often opens a passage with the expression "I implore you..."<sup>3</sup>. This exhortation is necessary because nobody is perfect either in knowledge or in behaviour. Therefore exhortation is a service which has to be rendered to each other. As the ability to discern the will of God depends on the two conditions mentioned in Rom. 12,2 there will always be differences of insight among Christians, according to their fulfilment of these conditions. Paul knows that he has been given a special gift in this respect<sup>4</sup>. For the Philippians he prays "that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent..."<sup>5</sup>.

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1) see ThWNT V 790 ff.

cf. H. Schlier, Vom Wesen der apostolischen Ermahnung (in 'Die Zeit der Kirche, Freiburg 1958<sup>2</sup> p.74-89). "So sehen wir, vom Begriff παρακαλεῖν selbst darauf verwiesen, bereits einige Wesenszüge der apostolischen Ermahnung. Als eine besondere Form der Verkündigung, als jenes andringende, beschwörende Ermahnen, das dem Bekümmernis um den Ermahnten entspringt, ihn fast mehr bittet als fordert, richtet sie sich, nicht Stimme des anfahrenden und beschämenden Gesetzes, sondern Träger eines verborgenen Trostes an die Brüder, die Glieder der Familie Gottes auf dem Grunde gegenseitiger Liebe sind." p.78. cf also his definition on p. 89.

2) Col. 3,16

3) In the English Bibles different translations are used for this word: appeal to, stir, implore, admonish etc.

4) Rom. 12,3

5) Phil. 1,9-10

We may not overlook the connexion between Christ's wisdom and the wisdom we need in order to lead a life worthy of the Lord. It is said that in Christ are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom (σοφία) and knowledge (γνῶσις)" and that we are expected to attain the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of this mystery of God<sup>2</sup>. Often the "divine wisdom in Christ" is related to history<sup>3</sup> and God's strange way of salvation<sup>4</sup>. But on other occasions Paul connects the knowledge of Christ's wisdom with Christian life, i.e. with ethics<sup>5</sup>, as when he prays for the Colossians "that you may be filled with the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of his will in all spiritual wisdom (σοφία) and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of God"<sup>6</sup>. So it applies also to the realm of ethics if it is said that "Christ Jesus is made our wisdom"<sup>7</sup>.

We noticed at the beginning that the new life of the Christian is based on a new reality, i.e. his union with Christ in baptism. What he has to do therefore is not to strive after some far-off ideal, but only to be what he already is, a new creation<sup>8</sup>. He is not told to do this

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1) Col. 2,3

2) Col. 2,2

3) 'Heilsgeschichte'

4) cf. 1 Cor. 2

5) see E.J. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ, p. 136 ff.

6) Col. 1,9-10

7) 1 Cor. 1,30. The same relation between knowledge (gnosis, sophia) and exhortation appears with regard to the term *νοουθετέω*, see Rom. 15,14; Col. 1,28; 3,16.

8) G. Bornkamm has expounded this thought from the point of view of love in his beautiful study on 1 Cor. 13: Der köstlichere Weg (in: Das Ende des Gesetzes, München 1952, p.93 ff.) "Und doch wäre es verkehrt, hier die Liebe nur als das am Gegenteil abgelesene, ferne Ideal zu verstehen, als den blossen Gegenbegriff zu Ungeduld, Bosheit, Prahlerei usw., eine unerreichbare, in lockender und doch tödlicher Helle erstrahlende Idee am reinen Gestirnhimmel der Werte, nein - Paulus kann so lobpreisend, bewegt, erfüllt von ihr reden, weil sie eine Wirklichkeit ist, so lebendig, konkret und mannigfaltig im einzelnen wirksam, wie es 4-7 geschildert ist, und zugleich ist sie die alles umgreifende Macht Gottes, in Kraft gesetzt mitten in dieser Welt als die Liebe Gottes in Jesus Christus... Die Liebe ist das Schon-jetzt-Gegenwärtigsein des neuen Aeon, d.h. die Gegen-

and that in order to become righteous and holy, but because he is righteous and holy his life has to be consistent with this new state<sup>1</sup>. This fact is made unmistakably clear in Paul's epistles, not only in his teaching about God's grace, who has done everything in Christ, but also in the way he introduces the exhortations and bases them on the "fait accompli" of our justification.

When he deals with ethical issues in a fundamental way, he argues from the union of the Christian with Christ<sup>2</sup>. E.g. a Christian cannot go to a harlot because he is one with Christ<sup>3</sup>, he does not take part in meals connected with idol-offerings because he shares in the body and blood of Christ<sup>4</sup>. Why has the Christian to "put away falsehood and to speak the truth with his neighbour"? Because "we are members one of another" as the body of Christ<sup>5</sup>. In these instances Paul could have pointed to the Seventh, First and Ninth Commandments of the Decalogue if this code had ever been in his mind when he was speaking about christian life. But for Paul the basic revelation of God's will for the Church is not in the Old Testament but in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

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wart Christi selbst in der Gemeinde. So ist die Liebe der Gnadenbereich Gottes, der die Glaubenden umfasst hält, eine Lebensmacht, die in gewissem Sinn eher da ist als die Glaubenden: aus ihr empfangen sie ihr Leben und von ihr umfassen sie leben sie." p. 109-110.

- 1) cf. G. Bornkamm, Taufe und neues Leben bei Paulus, ThBl 1939 Sp.240: "Was sagt Paulus über den Vollzug des neuen Lebens? Das Entscheidende ist offenbar dies, dass er in den Mahnungen nur wiederholt, was in der Taufe selbst schon geschehen ist. Die Mahnungen führen über den Umkreis dessen, was in der Taufe geschehen ist, nicht hinaus... Darum appelliert ja der Imperativ nicht an den guten Willen, darum mobilisiert er nicht die im Menschen liegenden guten Kräfte, sondern er gibt und fordert in einem - er ist paraklesis als aufrufender Trost und als tröstlicher Aufruf."
- 2) see E. Dinkler, Zum Problem der Ethik bei Paulus, ZThK p.167-200, esp. p. 194-195.
- 3) 1 Cor. 6
- 4) 1 Cor. 10
- 5) Eph. 4,25.16
- 6) see P. Feine, Theologie des N.T. Berlin 1953, Part III Ch.8, esp. §1: Christus ist die Norm der Ethik des Apostels. (p. 287 ff).

e) References to the Torah in Paul's exhortatory passages.

As already mentioned there are several instances in Paul's exhortatory passages where the Old Testament is referred to. Let us look at them one by one:

Rom. 12,19-20: Here Paul refers to a saying of Jesus from the sermon on the Mount, connecting it with a similar thought in Prov. 25,21 and giving the reason why we have not to avenge ourselves by quoting Dt. 32,35: Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

1 Cor. 9,9 (= 1 Tim. 5,18): Here the right of the Apostles to be supported by the Church is proved a) on grounds of the generally acknowledged custom of compensating a service rendered, and b) on grounds of a commandment in the Pentateuch (Dt. 25,4), which is explained in an allegorical manner.

1 Cor. 14,34: The women are not permitted to speak in the Church, but should be subordinate "as even the law says". It is not clear what Paul here refers to; perhaps Gen. 3,16?

2 Cor. 6,16-18: Quotations from Num. 16,26; Jes. 52,11; Jer. 31,9 to show that we are the temple of the living God and therefore may not be mised with unbelievers.

2 Cor. 10,17: a quotation from Jeremiah, not referred to as being from the Old Testament.

Eph. 4,25-26: Two quotations from the Old Testament (Zach. 8,10 and Ps. 4,5) not made known as such, among many other exhortations.

Eph. 6,2-3: Reference to the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue. In § 8.3 we have already proved that this commandment does not form the basis of Paul's exhortation but is introduced into the pattern of the "Household rules" by way of reference.

This short survey of the few passages where Paul in the course of his exhortations quotes passages from the Old Testament does not disprove

in the least what has been stated above, i.e. that Paul did not base his ethical teaching on the Old Testament Law but on Christ. On the contrary it is surprising how seldom he makes allusion to the Old Testament in his exhortatory passages if we remember that his former life had been dominated totally by the Law<sup>1</sup>. The passage 1 Cor. 9,9 is actually the only place where he uses an Old Testament commandment in order to decide a practical question, and even there he introduces it in the second instance after having mentioned the common habit in society<sup>2</sup>.

#### 5. Summary and conclusion.

The subject of this chapter was an investigation of the theological reasons for the absence of the Decalogue in Paul's ethical teaching. It was necessary to view the issue on a wider range and to investigate Paul's conception of the Law as a whole, because for him the Law was an indivisible unit.

Paul's message consists in the Good News that God in Christ's death has reconciled the world to himself. Christ's death and resurrection created a new reality, and whoever believes and is baptized takes part in this new reality: he is dead to sin and Law and has become a new creature. His life from now on is determined by his union with Christ. With mind and body he is obedient to the new Master who abides in him through his Holy Spirit, giving him assistance in his struggle against the flesh. The words faith, obedience, love and imitation express his

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1) see H.v.Campenhausen, op.cit. p. 37: "Paulus denkt und lebt... von klein auf in und mit diesem Buch (= A.T.), das für ihn auch nach seinem Christwerden vertraut und ein heilig-unfehlbares Buch Gottes geblieben ist. Und doch ist es jetzt in seinem wichtigsten Teil, der für Paulus wie für jeden Juden das Zentrum der "Schrift" bildete, durchaus um seine Geltung gebracht: die Christen stehen nicht mehr unter dem 'Gesetz'."

2) see ThWNT IV 1070.7 ff.



personal relationship to Christ. Faith and love are essential for the shaping of his life. Through the renewal of his mind he is able to prove what is the will of God in the different circumstances of his existence<sup>1</sup>.

In Christ he died not only to sin, but also to the Law. The letters carved on stone in the old Covenant could only reveal sin, condemn and kill. But Christ has cancelled and nailed to the cross the bond which stood against us with its legal demands. The Law was Israel's tutor until the coming of Christ, but now it has lost its function together with the old Covenant<sup>2</sup>.

If Paul had used the Decalogue as a basis for his exhortations it would signify that

- 1) Christ's work on the cross was only half done when he abolished in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances.
- 2) Christian life is not based on the union with Christ, but on a code which was given to Israel for a certain time, i.e. until the coming of Christ.
- 3) We prefer to go on in the hopeless struggle between Law and flesh instead of living in the freedom of the Spirit.
- 4) God's revelation in Christ is subordinate to the revelation on Mount Sinai.
- 5) We exchange the basic commandment of love (which is the fulfilment of the Law) for commandments which do not demand a total and radical offering of ourselves to God.

Because these would have been the inevitable inferences if Paul had used the Decalogue as a standard and basis for Christian life, he simply did not use it.

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- 1) In the view of this New Testament evidence it is strange that Bultmann in his article 'Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus' (ZNW 1924 p. 123 ff) cannot discover anything new in Christian ethics.
  - 2) cf. v. Campenhausen, op.cit. p. 38-39: "Im Grunde hat das Alte Testament bei Paulus nur eine einzige Aufgabe, zu deren Bewältigung es schlechthin unenutzebar bleibt: das ist, seine eigene Ueberholtheit und

## § 10 Jesus and the Law.

### 1. Introduction.

It is not possible in this paragraph to make a detailed study of Jesus' attitude towards the Law because this would require an analysis of the various sources of the synoptic Gospels. Even if this difficult investigation were undertaken we could not hope to attain unequivocal results concerning our subject. Branscomb, who has written a thorough study of this matter, makes the somewhat perplexing statement:

"One can construct a sort of chromatic scale made of sayings of Jesus in which all the notes are struck from the complete rejection of the law to its complete affirmation"<sup>1</sup>.

What are the reasons which led to this strange fact? In the first place we have to realize that Jesus did not deal in a systematic way with the question of the Law, and there may even have been some inconsistency in his attitude, caused by the variety of circumstances in which he was speaking and acting and by the development in his dealing with the Scribes and Pharisees. Moreover we have to take into account that the Gospels were written some decades after Jesus' death and reflect to some extent the theology of the circles in which they appeared. The authors of the Gospels did not intend to give an objective picture of the life of Jesus, i.e. their account is not "historical" in the modern sense of the word. They were living in certain circumstances, their thinking was influenced by different traditions which depended on the combinations and experiences of the respective Churches, and they were writing with special questions and problems in mind<sup>2</sup>.

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Entbehrlichkeit für die Christen zu erweisen... Allein diese geschichtliche Zeugenfunktion, die das Alte Testament bei Paulus besitzt, macht sein Gesetz und seine Gebote noch nicht zur verpflichtenden Norm der gegenwärtigen Kirche, sondern hat es in dieser Bedeutung vielmehr gerade erledigt."

- 1) B.H. Branscomb, Jesus and the law of Moses, New York 1930, p.2-3. cf. L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 181.
- 2) For Matthew see: Gerh. Barth, Das Gesetzesverständnis des Evangelisten Matthäus, in G. Bornkamm etc. Ueberlieferung und Auslegung im

Nevertheless it must be possible to discover in the Gospels also those items which were essential for Paul's conclusions concerning the significance of the Law and its validity (or invalidity) for the Gentile Churches<sup>1</sup>. It is thus in the following not our intention to compare the theologies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, Q and possible other sources with regard to the Law, but to find out the features which became constitutive for Paul's theology concerning the Law.

The fact that Jesus was living under the Law and that a great deal of his sayings do not differ from Rabbinic tradition leads immediately to the question why he then was rejected by the Jewish leaders. It appears that the main reason for his condemnation was his attitude towards the Law, his calling in question - whether directly or indirectly - of the Law as it had been understood hitherto. This questioning of the Law, its place and its function is evident from Jesus' acts (his dealing with sinners and his 'transgressions' of the Law), from his appearance with divine authority, and from his actual teaching. These three items were felt as deadly blows against the Jewish conception of Law, and as the Law was the foundation of Judaism there existed only the alternative either to reject Judaism or Jesus<sup>2</sup>.

After a short summary of the texts which show Jesus under the Law we shall investigate the three important points mentioned above. As Jesus' extraordinary dealing with the sinners and his attitude towards the Law can only be understood in connection with his divine authority, this last item will appear not only in the special section given to it, but moreover as the background of the other expositions.

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Matthäus-Evangelium, p. 54-154, Neukirchen 1960.

1) see Ad. v. Harnack, Hat Jesus das alttestamentliche Gesetz abgeschafft? (in: Aus Wissenschaft und Leben, Giessen 1911).

2) see L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, Gütersloh 1954, p.47.

## 2. The riddle of Jesus' attitude concerning the Law and the sinners.

### a) Jesus under the Law.

Jesus was born and brought up as a Jew<sup>1</sup>. He called the temple his father's house<sup>2</sup> and did not question the offerings made in the temple<sup>3</sup>. On the Sabbath he went regularly to the synagogue<sup>4</sup>. He wore a fringed garment as commanded in the Law<sup>5</sup>, paid the temple-tax<sup>6</sup> and sent the healed lepers to the priests to make the offerings prescribed in the Law<sup>7</sup>. The Passover was celebrated with his disciples as a matter of course<sup>8</sup>. God's will is made known in the commandments of the Old Testament<sup>9</sup>. Jesus was not only "born under the Law"<sup>10</sup>, but he lived under the Law.

### b) The new relation to God based on forgiveness.

In Judaism the relation between God and man is regulated by the Law. Whoever keeps the Law is just, but the transgressors are the sinners who have no hope of being accepted by God. This idea is expressed most clearly by the party of the Pharisees who endeavour to keep the Law perfectly while separating themselves strictly from the unpious. The transgressors of the Law were looked upon with utter contempt.<sup>11</sup> But Jesus "welcomes sinners and eats with them"<sup>12</sup>. He does not refute the remark that he is "a glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners"<sup>13</sup>, on the contrary he stresses that he has "not come to invite virtuous people, but sinners"<sup>14</sup>. He forgives sin<sup>15</sup> and will not condemn a woman who according to the Law ought to be stoned<sup>16</sup>.

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- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1) Lk. 2,22-24.27-28.39.41.51                      | 2) Lk. 2,49               |
| 3) Mt. 5,23-24                                     | 4) Lk. 4,16               |
| 5) Mk. 6,56; cf. Branscomb, op.cit. p. 115-116     |                           |
| 6) Mt. 17,27                                       | 7) Lev. 14; Mk. 1,44 par. |
| 8) Mt. 26,17; Lk. 22,9                             | 9) Mk. 10,19 par.         |
| 10) Gal. 4,4                                       |                           |
| 11) Lk. 18,9 ff; 7,39; Joh. 7,49; Pirque aboth 2,5 |                           |
| 12) Lk. 15,2                                       | 13) Mt. 11,19             |
| 14) Mk. 2,17                                       | 15) Mk. 2,5               |
| 16) Joh. 8,1-11                                    |                           |

The men who keep the Law and think themselves just in the eyes of God are told that "tax-gatherers and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead" of them<sup>1</sup>. The Galileans killed by Pilate, and those buried in the fall of the tower of Siloam are said to be not more guilty than the people of Jerusalem. "Unless you repent you will all come to the same end."<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that Jesus did not intend to abolish the Law as such or to declare sin as irrelevant. The prodigal son is called lost and dead<sup>3</sup>. Jesus takes up the traditional terms "righteous" and "sinner"<sup>4</sup>, but he also reveals that these terms do not ultimately decide man's relation to God. The "sinful" tax-gatherer went home justified rather than the "righteous" Pharisee<sup>5</sup>. The standards until then taken for granted in relation to the Kingdom of God (eternal life) are reversed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"<sup>6</sup>. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees... you do not enter the kingdom of heaven"<sup>7</sup>.

This attitude of Jesus towards the sinners reveals unmistakably that the Law is not the decisive factor for man's relationship to God. Jesus forgives sin and invites people to enter into the kingdom of God irrespective of their righteousness according to the Law<sup>8</sup>. This rouses the question of his authority (ἐξουσία). The question put in the mouths of the "chief priests and elders of the nation" in Mt.21,23 must have been in their minds all the time: "By what authority are you acting like this? Who gave you this authority?"

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1) Mt. 21,31

2) Lk. 13,1-5

3) Lk. 15,24

4) Mk. 2,17

5) Lk. 18,14

6) Mt. 5,3

7) Mt. 23,13

8) see L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p.54: "Der Anteil am Heil, den die Gesetzesordnung von der Erfüllung des Gesetzes abhängig macht, ist jetzt ausschliesslich abhängig vom Anschluss an Jesus. Jesu Mittlerschaft löst die Mittlerschaft des Gesetzes ab, sein Joch das des Gesetzes.

c) Jesus' freedom in relation to the Law.

By the act of eating with the sinners Jesus "did run the constant risk of ceremonial defilement and of eating untithed foods"<sup>1</sup>. In the discussions which arose from these and other occasions Jesus actually declared some of the Old Testament commandments as irrelevant.

In the question of fasting he explains that with him something new has appeared which does not fit into the old forms<sup>2</sup>.

Jesus' transgressions of the Sabbath law (as understood in contemporary Judaism) formed a point of vivid controversy. It is interesting to note that Jesus in all the discussions concerning this issue never speaks about "traditions of the elders" as he does in other instances. If the Rabbis, among the 39 principal species of works forbidden on a sabbath<sup>3</sup> mentioned the reaping (including the picking of fruit) and the carrying of loads out of the house, they did so on strong scriptural grounds<sup>4</sup>. The new 'halakhots' given by Jesus<sup>5</sup> in order to justify the picking of ears of corn by his disciples can - such as they are - hardly be considered as more convincing than the Rabbinic 'halakhots' based on the texts mentioned above. They derive their strength only from the presupposition that "something greater than the temple is here"<sup>6</sup>. What is stressed in Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees is not primarily the question of interpretation of the sabbath law, but his liberty in relation to this law<sup>7</sup>.

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1) Branscomb, op.cit. p.135

2) Mk. 2,18-22 par. The early Church did not consider this word as limited to the time of Jesus' earthly life. cf. Schniewind, Markusevangelium, NTD 1960, p.29: "Uns ist aus der urchristlichen Gemeinde keine Sitte regelmässigen Fastens bekannt."

3) Moore, Judaism II p.28 f. 4) Ex. 16,22-30; Jer. 17,19-27.

5) Mt. 12,3-5

6) see Lohmeyer, Ev. Matth. p. 184

7) see further p.148ff; cf. Branscomb, op.cit. p. 145: "It is very obvious that Jesus does not in this instance defend his disciples by protesting against the definition of their act as work. He accepts the scribal ruling on this point without debate - a fact which points strongly against the view that his opposition was solely to the oral rulings of the scribes."



When Jesus teaches that "nothing that goes into a man from outside can defile him"<sup>1</sup> he is again in contradiction with the Mosaic Law. Mark's conclusion is to the point, "Thus he declared all foods clean"<sup>2</sup>. The Old Testament distinction between clean and unclean food (Lev.11) is virtually abrogated.

In the question of divorce Jesus makes a difference between the Law of Moses and God's original intention<sup>3</sup>. The ordinance about divorce has thus only a relative validity, it even leads to sin<sup>4</sup>.

The law of retaliation<sup>5</sup> is abrogated in the Sermon on the Mount and replaced by a commandment contrary to it<sup>6</sup>.

The commandment "love your neighbour" seemed to imply that the enemy might be hated. Jesus calls this: ethics of the tax-gatherers and pagans, and commands to love one's enemies<sup>7</sup>.

Here too the question has to be raised: By what authority does Jesus claim not only to give a new interpretation of the Law, but to declare certain Old Testament precepts as irrelevant and to establish his own commands over against that which the "forefathers were told"?

### 3. The Kingdom of God and its implications.

#### a) The kingdom of God has come.

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed to act and speak with divine authority. In him "the kingdom of God has already come upon you"<sup>8</sup>,

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1) Mk. 7,15

2) Mk. 7,19; on this subject see Branscomb, op.cit.p.89 f and 175 ff.

3) Mk. 10,1-12 par.; Mt. 5,31-32.

4) Mk. 10,11; cf. Branscomb, op.cit. p.154: "Jesus declared that the Mosaic Law was a concession to human weakness, but he also described as adultery that which the Law permitted. This is to state its dissonance with the divine will in the strongest possible terms."

5) Ex. 21,24

6) Mt. 5,38 ff.

7) Mt. 5,43-48

8) Lk. 11,20

it is "among you"<sup>1</sup>. Though this formulation is not found with Matthew and Mark, the conviction of Jesus' divine mission is the same. What the people are witnessing is nothing else than the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the messianic age<sup>2</sup>. The title "Son of Man" is the secret title of the Messiah (Schniewind). If he says that the "Son of Man has the right (authority, ἐξουσία) on earth to forgive sins"<sup>3</sup> this means nothing else than that God himself is acting and speaking in Jesus' deeds and words<sup>4</sup>.

In the Gospels the term "come" (ἔρχεται, ἦλθεν) has a deep significance<sup>5</sup>. It shows that the initiative lies not on man's side, but on God's. Righteousness and eternal life are not the result of man's struggle, but are dependent on God's coming down into the world. Jesus' "elthon"-sayings can only be rightly understood in connexion with his messianic office. Whether this verb is used alone or in relation with the notion "Son of Man", it always serves to reveal his messianic task. In the Gospel according to John the various aims of his coming are summed up in the statement: "I have come to save the world"<sup>6</sup>.

The significance of the verb "come" is still more obvious where it is preceded by the pronoun "I" (ἐγώ). This pronoun which emphasizes the person of the speaker, is the expression of divine authority. The combination of "I" and "(have) come" occurs several times in the Gospel according to John. The word "ego" reveals not only his authority, but also his union with his Father. The ego-sayings are of a quite singular significance where they are connected with a predicative noun (e.g.

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1) Lk. 17, 21; cf. H.D. Wendland, *Geschichtsanschauung und Geschichtsbesusstsein im Neuen Testament*, 1938 p. 70: "Die entscheidende Frage der jüdischen Frömmigkeit: Wann kommt die Königsherrschaft Gottes? (Lk. 17, 20) ist bereits überholt, sie ist gegenstandslos geworden und hat ihre Antwort gefunden: die Gottesherrschaft ist da."

2) Mt. 11, 5

3) Mk. 2, 10 par.

4) cf. ThWNT II 566.23 ff: "ἐξουσία πνεύματος" setzt göttlichen Auftrag und Bevollmächtigung voraus, die zugleich Macht ist, und das Besondere dieser ἐξουσία ist, dass sie von der Verkündigung, dass das Reich Gottes "nahe" ist, nicht zu trennen ist. Indem der Träger dieser ἐξουσία, der Macht, zu heilen und Sünden zu vergeben, da ist, ist auch das Reich Gottes da."

5) For the following see esp. ThWNT, Joh. Schneider, art. ἔρχομαι II p. 662 ff and E. Stauffer, art. ἐγώ II p. 341 ff.

6) Joh. 12, 47



What is man expected to do in this new situation? "The Kingdom of God is upon you; repent and believe the Gospel!"<sup>1</sup> To repent means to return, to turn back, to change one's relation to God<sup>2</sup>. The fact that this call is addressed to everybody shows that neither the "just" nor the "sinner" will be able to enter the kingdom without repentance<sup>3</sup>. "God's ultimate, decisive revelation asks from man an ultimate, absolute decision: radical return, change of his being, ultimate renunciation of the evil, a determined directing himself to God in full obedience"<sup>4</sup>. But this repentance does not imply a human endeavour to acquire righteousness according to the manner of the Pharisees. It is rather an attitude of passivity, a readiness to receive what God is giving to man. "Whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it"<sup>5</sup>.

God's radical demand is not presented in an abstract way, but is realized in Jesus' call to come to him and to follow after him. To the coming of God's Kingdom with Jesus corresponds man's coming to him. "Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief"<sup>6</sup>. Jesus comes to man not only half-way, but regardless of boundaries set up by the Law, social convention and religious prejudice, he touches unclean people to heal them, eats and drinks with

1) Mk. 1,15

2) The term repent, *μετανοεῖν*, has to be interpreted in the sense of the Old Testament *שׁוּב*, cf. ThWNT IV 994 ff. and Schniewind, Markus-evangelium p.10: "Diese Umkehr schliesst, wie den innersten 'Sinn' ('das Herz'), so das äussere ganze Verhalten in sich. Sie ist eine Wandlung der Gottesbeziehung, nicht zunächst eine Wandlung des Menschen in sich."

3) Mk. 2,17 par. does not acknowledge an objective righteousness of the Pharisees, cf. Mt. 3,7-8; 23,13!

4) Behm ThWNT IV 997.12 ff.

5) Mk. 10,16; cf. Schniewind ad loc. "Der Weg zur zukünftigen Herrschaft Gottes ist nicht die Leistung des Menschen, sondern Gottes Geben, und die menschliche Haltung kann dann nur der des Kindes entsprechen, das schlechthin aufs Empfangen angewiesen ist."

6) Mt. 12,28

tax-gatherers and prostitutes in their houses,<sup>1</sup> converses with Samaritans<sup>2</sup> and occasionally even with pagans. He comes unconditionally and without reserve, and he expects man to come to him in the same way<sup>3</sup>. Time and again he calls people: "Come with me", and they follow him. He explains that this coming with him (following him) means total surrender. A follower must leave self behind and be ready to let himself be lost for Jesus' sake<sup>4</sup>.

Here man's relationship to God is not regulated by the Law, but by man's response to Jesus' call<sup>5</sup>. This does not of course mean that obedience to God's will has become irrelevant. But in this new situation God's will is not fulfilled in the first place by the keeping of the Law, but by the acceptance of God's gift which comprehends God's radical demand<sup>6</sup>. The traditional conception of how man attains righteousness is not only turned upside down, but man's relationship to God is given a new centre.

- 1) see J. Abrahams, *Studies In Pharisaism and the Gospel I* Cambridge 1917, p.56: "It is not at all the case that a Pharisee would have declined to receive even 'sinners' at his own table. But he might have refused an invitation to join them at their table, where the ritual and atmosphere could hardly fail to be uncongenial."
- 2) The Samaritan woman (Joh.4,9) was shocked when Jesus asked her for a drink from her water-jug, as "Jews and Samaritans do not use vessels in common". According to Daube (op.cit. p.373 ff) the meaning of *synchraomai* is almost certainly "to use - scil. vessels - together". The New English Bible<sup>a</sup> has adopted this interpretation and given the translation quoted above.
- 3) cf. Kittel in ThWNT I 214.25 "das *ἀκοινωνεῖν* ist: Teilhaben an dem in Jesus sich anbietenden Heil."
- 4) Mt. 16,24 f.
- 5) "The new life is not a law, not a set of principles, a programme, or an ideal. Discipleship means Jesus Christ, and Him alone. It cannot consist of anything more than that. When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to His person. The grace of His call bursts all bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the Gospel." (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p.51)
- 6) cf. W. Kümmel, *Jesus und Paulus*, Sp.224: "Jesus verkündet konkret die mit seinem Auftreten im geheimen schon beginnende eschatologische Heilszeit, die Gottes vergebendes Handeln offenbart, aber man kann dieses Handeln nur dort fassen, wo man den Boten anerkennt, der diese Botschaft real bringt."



According to Judaism God has put something in front of man, i.e. his Law, and if man keeps this Law he will attain the reward for his obedience, eternal life. Thus

(God's will =) Law - keeping of the Law - life.

In Jesus however life is offered to man not as a reward, but as an unconditioned gift, and man is not confronted with a law which can be pocketed and handled by him, but God's will is done by man's acceptance of Jesus and his submission to him. God's gift and demand is thus centred in Jesus, and man's relationship to God is determined by his personal relationship to Jesus<sup>1</sup>.

It is often said that Jesus pointed to the Old Testament Law as the expression of God's demand, and as main proof of this tenet are Jesus' words to the rich youth, "keep the commandments". As a matter of fact this passage rather disproves what it ought to prove! Whatever Jesus' intention was with this answer, the continuation of the story makes it clear, that not in the keeping of the commandments, but by the following of Jesus would God's will have been done<sup>2</sup>.

Not only man's relationship to God is put on a new basis by Jesus, but also his relationship to his fellow-men. Not the Law as expressed for instance in the ius talionis (order of retaliation) is to constitute his attitude to his fellow-man, but as one who is forgiven by God he is expected to forgive those who have wronged him. This forgiveness may not be limited in any way, because God's forgiveness is beyond all comprehension<sup>3</sup>.

The adequate attitude of the follower of Jesus towards his fellow-man is that of a servant<sup>4</sup>, as Jesus himself gives the example: "Here am I

1) see the article *μαρτυρία* in ThWNT IV, esp. p. 448 ff.

2) see below p.156 ff. cf. ThWNT I 214.28.

3) Mt. 18,21-35.

4) "Jesu Dienstbegriff wächst heraus aus dem alttestamentlichen Gebot der Nächstenliebe, das er aufgenommen und in Verbindung mit dem Gebot der Gottesliebe zum Inbegriff der gottgewollten sittlichen Haltung des ihm nachfolgenden Menschen gemacht hat." ThWNT II 83.26.



among you like a servant"<sup>1</sup>. This is the mission of the Son of Man: "He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to surrender his life as a ransom for many"<sup>2</sup>. Hence the greatness of the disciple consists in his humbleness as a servant<sup>3</sup>.

The Synoptics generally do not speak of God's love or Jesus' love towards man<sup>4</sup>. But it is obvious that forgiveness and service are expressions of the divine love and it is therefore consistent if John stresses God's love for the world and Jesus' love for the disciples. Lk. 7,47 shows that man's answer to forgiveness is love towards Jesus. Whoever loves father, mother, son or daughter more than Jesus is not worthy of him<sup>5</sup>.

Life in this divine love becomes the basis for the new relationship between man and his fellow-men. Here again it is not in the first place the Law (e.g. the law of retaliation) which determines my attitude, but love, even love towards my enemies<sup>6</sup>.

Jesus acknowledges a natural, ordinary love within the family<sup>7</sup>, among the members of a certain class<sup>8</sup> and a certain people<sup>9</sup>. This love of the tax-gatherers and the heathen is not equivalent to the love taught by Jesus. Human love is the ordinary, but God's extraordinary love and goodness<sup>10</sup> has to result in an extraordinary love among his children. It is just this "extraordinary"<sup>11</sup> which makes all the difference. This love of Jesus which results in the love of the disciples towards their neighbours (including the enemy) is stressed very strongly in John's Gospel<sup>12</sup>.

1) Lk. 22,27

2) Mt. 20,28

3) Mt. 20,27; 23,11; Lk. 22,25; Joh. 13,1-17.

4) exception Mk. 10,21

5) Mt. 10,37

6) Mt. 5,45; Lk. 10,33. "Durch seine Vergebungstat hat Gott der Menschenwelt eine neue Ordnung gesetzt, die die alte Rang- und Weltordnung aufhebt, überbietet, und ebenso viele neue Aufgaben schafft wie neue Möglichkeiten. Das neue Verhältnis Gottes zum Menschen schafft die Grundlagen für ein neues Verhältnis von Mensch zu Mensch," ThWNT I 47.36

7) Mt. 7,11

8) Mt. 5,46

9) Mt. 5,47

10) Mt. 5,45

11) Mt. 5,47 *περισσόν*; for this conception see further p. 437 n.4

12) Joh. 13,34-35; 15,12-17

What are the implications of this "new order which suspends and exceeds the old order of merit"<sup>1</sup>, especially with relation to the Old Testament Law? It has already become clear that Jesus did not intend to abrogate the Jewish Law. When he was asked about the greatest commandment he pointed to two Old Testament commandments and thus showed that love was already God's central and basic demand in the Torah. Nevertheless it appears that by putting the Double Commandment of Love at the top of the other precepts Jesus creates a criterion to which all the other commandments are submitted and, as it were, examined how far they are able to agree with this commandment and thus may be considered as expressions of this love, or to what extent they hinder love and therefore have to be suspended or at least reinterpreted.

#### b) The Double Commandment of Love.

Jesus, when asked by one of the lawyers about the greatest commandment in the Law<sup>2</sup>, pointed to the wellknown commandments of love towards God and the neighbour<sup>3</sup>. The combination of these two commandments is unprecedented in Rabbinism<sup>4</sup>, but after our previous investigation we need not explain further why Jesus in his answer quoted these two passages.

The idea of inquiring after the greatest commandments (usually called the weighty commandments) was not new in Jewish theology. The Rabbis

1) p. 139 n.6

2) Mk. 12,28-34 par. Lk 10,25 ff gives a different rendering of the story. Here a lawyer puts the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" and the quotation of the two great commandments is put into the mouth of the questioner.

3) Deut. 6,5 and Lev. 19,18.

4) Daube (op.cit. p.247) contends that these two commandments "were coupled as basic requirements already in pre-Christian Judaism" and he points to Test. of XII Patriarchs, Issachar 5,2; 7,5; Dan 5,3 - "not to mention Micah 6,8". In the Testaments however these commandments occur without emphasis and are not in the Old Testament formulation, and Micah shows no formal relation to the commandments in question.

occasionally summarized the Torah in a central commandment<sup>1</sup> or made a difference theoretically between weighty and light commandments<sup>2</sup>. But in principle every commandment is considered to be of the same value because all of them are related to God, and the reward contributed to each of them is not known by man<sup>3</sup>.

If we consider Jesus' answer against the background of his other sayings and especially of his general attitude towards the Law and the sinners it is clear that he did not make just a theoretical distinction. The two commandments of love are not *primi inter pares*, but "everything in the Law and the Prophets hangs on them" as the door hangs in the door hinge<sup>4</sup> or as objects hang on a nail and would fall down if they were not held by it<sup>5</sup>. For Jesus these two commandments are not just the sum of the Law nor do they form somehow the top of a pyramid; but they are "ultimate constitutions which give foundation to the law, and its character and validity depends on them"<sup>6</sup>.

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1) e.g. Hillel, Bab. Schabbat 31 a, see below.

2) cf. Montefiore, The Synoptic Gospels II p. 48; Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels I p. 18-29.

3) see Str.-B. I p.249 and p. 900 ff and the instructive parable in Midr. Rab. Ki Thetze VI,2.

cf. Bonsirven, op.cit. II p.79: "Nous ne voyons pas que jamais ce text biblique (Dt. 6,5) ait été proposé comme le principe résumant toute la loi; les formules suggérées se placent plutôt au point de vue, soit de la pratique de la loi, soit de la justice et de la charité envers le prochain."

cf. G. Bornkamm, Das Doppelgebot der Liebe, in Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann, Berlin 1954, p.86: "Zugespitzt liesse sich sagen, dass zum Prinzip des jüdischen Gesetzesverständnisses gerade die Ausschliessung und Abwehr der Frage nach einem Prinzip des Gesetzes im Ganzen gehört."

see also G. Barth, Das Gesetzesverständnis des Evangelisten Matthäus, in op.cit. p. 96-97

4) W. Bauer, Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, art. *χρυσάυμι* p. 215/6

5) ThWNT III p.919. cf. Lohmeyer, Matthäusevangelium 1958 p. 330 n.1

6) see Lohmeyer, op.cit. p.330: "Das Gesetz und die Propheten sind also nicht mehr ein Letztes, das bedingungslos hingenommen würde, sondern ein Vorletztes, das auf jene beiden letzten Sätze verweist. Man begreift von hier aus, warum zum Ausdruck solcher Beziehungen das

With this conception Jesus leaves the Jewish understanding of the Law far behind and lays down a criterion which becomes normative for his attitude towards the Law<sup>1</sup>. He does not analyse the Torah theoretically in order to examine to what extent the various commandments really hang on this nail and turn in this hinge, but his freedom with regard to certain precepts reveals that he does not endeavour to agree with all the commandments of the Torah, but that he lives and acts on the basis of the Double Commandment of Love. He even goes so far as to abolish certain Old Testament commandments, which are not in agreement with this ultimate constitution<sup>2</sup>.

These implications were not expounded explicitly to the questioner and maybe the hearers were not aware of the far-reaching consequences, because when the Rabbis gave a summary of the Law, it was of no practical consequence. This is obvious from Hillel's answer to a would-be proselyte, who asked to be taught the Law while he stood on one foot: "That which thou hatest do not to thy fellow; this is the whole law; the rest is commentary; go and learn it." To learn the rest (= the other commandments) is inevitable.

Branscomb<sup>3</sup> points to another Rabbinic attempt to reduce the commandments<sup>4</sup>: "R. Simlai said, Six hundred and thirteen precepts were given

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prophetische Bild des Hängens gewählt worden ist; es hat eine doppelte Bestimmung, einmal 'das ganze Gesetz und die Propheten' aus dem Gebot der Liebe neu zu begründen und damit seine bisherige Absolutheit und Vielfältigkeit aufzuheben, sodann eben dieses Gesetz in seiner also beschränkten Gültigkeit zu belassen, weil es eben von Gott an diese beiden Pflöcke gehängt worden ist."

- 1) It is not the notion "kremannymi" which is new with Jesus, but its understanding and the conclusions drawn from it. According to Daube (op.cit. p.250) "Tala, 'to hang', 'to depend on', 'to follow from', 'to be derivable or intelligible from', is a technical term of Rabbinic exegesis... However, though by the time of Jesus most Rabbis held that the entire religion was implied in a small number of first principles, or even in a single one, yet they never ceased to insist on the absolute and independent validity of each particular commandment." (p.250-251)

2) see p. 146

3) op.cit. p. 268 f.

4) Tanh. B. 10.16b.

to Moses on Mt. Sinai... David came and reduced them to eleven (Ps. 15,2-5), then came Isaiah and reduced them to six (Is. 33,15), Micah brought them to three: 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God' (6,8). Then Amos established them as two. Seek me and live (5,5). Then came Habbakuk and made the law to stand on one principle, "The righteous shall live by his faith' (2,4)". But then he quotes some words of Abrahams which "will guard us from misunderstanding these rabbinic summaries"<sup>1</sup>:

"Naturally there was no intention in the Pharisaic authorities, who thus reduced the law to a few general rules, to deny the obligation to fulfil the rest of the law. When Akiba and Ben Azzai spoke of neighbourly love as the greatest fundamental law they meant such a general or basic commandment from which all the other commands could be deduced... The rabbi was not discriminating between the importance or unimportance of laws so much as between their fundamental or derivative character."<sup>2</sup>

Montefiore makes the point very clear<sup>3</sup>: "To a saying like that of Mt. 22,40 one could quote close parallels from the Rabbis. For the edification and needs of the moment a Rabbi would often use words which would seem to imply a 'fulfilment' of the Law by an ignoring of its details; but he would have been very much surprised if he had been asked by a pupil: 'May I then eat a rabbit?'. " Exactly here lies the difference between Jesus and the Rabbis. "Jesus would undoubtedly have declared that abstaining from meats was not what God wanted of men and that it was right to eat a rabbit if this was essential to one's service of his fellows, just as he himself ate untithed food, quite possibly food that was improperly killed or prepared, and food served in vessels that were not ceremonially clean."<sup>4</sup>

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1) op.cit. p. 269

2) Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, I p.24

3) Syn. Gosp. II p.48

4) Branscomb, op.cit. p.180.

On this subject see further Daube, op.cit. p.251: "The interdependence of all precepts, their fundamental equality, the importance of even



Although the two great commandments are already contained in the Old Testament, nevertheless they become something new through Jesus<sup>1</sup>. This is made apparent in the Gospel according to John.<sup>2</sup> The love of Jesus (I have loved you) becomes the basis and source of the love of the disciples, and at the same time shows how to love (as I have...). Therefore this commandment of love is called "a new commandment".

In John's Gospel there is a much stronger antithesis between Moses and Jesus than in the Synoptics. "While the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"<sup>3</sup>. Jesus is "the way, the truth and life"<sup>4</sup>, and as such he is the exclusive revealer of God's will. As he heeds his Father's commands and dwells in his love, so the disciples have to heed Jesus' commands and dwell in his love<sup>5</sup>. From the one command, love, emanate the many commands and lead back to the one command<sup>6</sup>. In the Epistles, John never uses the plural (ἐντολαί) without connecting it with the singular (ἐντολή), thus showing that to obey God's commands means to keep the one command, love<sup>7</sup>.

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the minor ones, or apparently minor ones, because of their association with the weightiest - these were common themes among the Tannaites." This scholar mentions an interesting Rabbinic teaching already in circulation in the 1st century A.D. (p.251-253): whoever observes the commandment of wearing the garment prescribed in Num. 15,38 ff is considered by God as if he had observed all. The observance of this precepts thus theoretically stands for the keeping of the whole Law. It is significant that in Judaism a minor ceremonial commandment could attain such a central importance. The difference in formulation between this Rabbinic saying and Rom. 13,8 may not be overlooked: "As if he had observed all", but "he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law".

1) cf. de Boer, Imitation of Paul, p.56 f.  
see further p.435ff of our thesis

2) Joh. 13,34

3) Joh. 1,17

4) Joh. 14,6

5) Joh. 15,10

6) Joh. 13,34; 14,15; 14,21.23.

7) see G. Eichholz, Glaube und Liebe im 1. Johannesbrief, EvTh 1937 p. 411 ff.

On this subject see further p.439 of our thesis.



In the Gospel according to Matthew there is still another word of Jesus said to be "the law and the prophets"<sup>1</sup>: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you". It is difficult however to attribute to this maxim the same weight as to the two great commandments. In the Gospel according to Luke<sup>2</sup> it is not connected with the Old Testament and has, according to its position in the context, not the same stress as in Matthew. To call it the Law and the Prophets is a constriction of the Old Testament, and its formulation is not original with Jesus<sup>3</sup>.

c) Jesus' authoritative proclamation and doing of God's will.

Jesus' freedom in relation to the Law as depicted in 2 c has to be understood against the background of his divine mission. He came in order to forgive, to serve and to bring divine help, in one word, with him appeared the kingdom of God, and consequently he had the authority to teach people by his example and his words what God asks from man, who is called to live in this kingdom. The hypocrisy of keeping God's Law only outwardly or with certain modifications is unmasked. God claims the whole man, not only certain actions, and man in his dealings with his fellow-men has to be perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect<sup>4</sup>. The Double Commandment of Love is considered the fountain-head of all the commandments, the proper expression of God's demand.

In Jesus' actions and words it appears that the Old Testament Law is not just identical with God's ultimate will and intention. Some commandments are abrogated explicitly or virtually, others are interpreted radically in the light of the double commandment of love.

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1) Mt. 7,12

2) Lk. 6,31

3) We have already mentioned Hillel. See also Tob. 4,15 and the letter of Aristee § 207. In the latter it occurs in the positive form. Moreover it is found in the ethical teaching of several peoples, see § 20.2.

cf. E. Klostermann, Das Matthäusevangelium, Tübingen 1927 p.68

Montefiore, Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings p. 150-151.

4) Mt. 5,48

Abrogation applies to the precepts of the certificate of divorce<sup>1</sup>, the oath<sup>2</sup> and the law of retaliation<sup>3</sup>. It is not stated that these commandments were bad or inadequate, on the contrary, the precept concerning the certificate of divorce was adequate for their "hardness of heart". The law of retaliation<sup>4</sup> hindered limitless revenge, and the commandment about the oath was a wall against insincerity and deceit. But now in the new situation these commandments have lost their justification. The human hardness of heart is overcome by God's love and forgiveness. Unconditional love and perfectness need no certificate of divorce, because they are faithful, no oath because they are sincere, no retaliation, because they forgive.

Other commandments are relativized and virtually abrogated. This concerns especially the precepts which by stressing outward purity tempted man to neglect the purity of the heart. With his teaching that "there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him"<sup>5</sup> Jesus virtually abrogates the precepts concerning forbidden food<sup>6</sup>, as is underlined in Mark's commentary: "Thus he declared all foods clean"<sup>7</sup>.

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1) Deut. 24,1; Mk. 10,2-12

2) Deut. 6,13; Mt. 5,34

3) Ex. 21,23-25; Mt. 5,39.

4) Daube (op.cit. p.254-265) convincingly proves that the "teaching under notice was not directed against talion in the literal sense", as it is very likely that by the time of Jesus "retaliation in the case of damage to a person had been superseded by money penalties" (cf. also Branscomb, op.cit. p. 31 f; 245 ff.). Besides, the instances given in connexion with the Old Testament quotation (e.g. a slap in the face) do not apply to mutilation but to insult. Jesus' teaching was thus that "a man should be meek under an insult, and not insist on such redress as the maxim 'an eye for an eye' would give him - which was such a sum of money for this kind of insult and such a sum for another kind" (p.257). Though it is hardly possible to disagree with Daube in his conclusion that Jesus "is not concerned with a certain historical system of punishment" it is nevertheless a fact that he repudiates an attitude based on such a law and sanctioned by it. (cf. Branscomb, op.cit. p.252).

5) Mk. 7,15

6) Lev. 11

7) Mk. 7,19

Several Old Testament commandments are interpreted radically<sup>1</sup>, e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>2</sup>. In Mt. 5,21-22 Jesus says that not only the murderer, but also he who nurses anger against his brother must be brought to judgement. He condemns thus not only the evil action, but also the thought which may lead to this action. At first sight it looks as if he were hedging up the law, i.e. erecting minor commandments (not to be angry etc.) in order to prevent people from taking a road which could eventually lead to the transgression of a great commandment (murder). This method was in common use in Judaism and its traces are still evident in the first chapters of the Didache. There is however an important difference between this Jewish hedging up of the Law and Jesus' interpretation of the 6th and 7th commandments. He does not warn against anger because it might lead to sin, but he declares anger to be sin, for it is against love and forgiveness. God's love and forgiveness are brought to the human heart, and here is therefore the place where the response of love and forgiveness towards the fellow-man has to rise. The 6th and 7th commandments are brought under the great commandments of love and interpreted in their light.

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- 1) This does not imply that Jesus' attitude towards the Law in general may be characterized by the term 'radical interpretation'. cf. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p.55: "Jesu Stellung zum Gesetz... kann u.E. nicht als radikale Gesetzesinterpretation, sondern nur als Aufhebung des Gesetzes durch das von Jesus gewirkte neue Werk Gottes verstanden werden.
  - 2) H. Windisch (Der Sinn der Bergpredigt, p.106) points to the fact that the material of the single demands of the Sermon on the Mount stem almost completely from the tradition, but the structure of the whole was so alien to Rabbinism that it must be repudiated by the Rabbis. Not only the content of his teaching, however, but also his personality, his 'exousia' was a reason for his repudiation by the religious leaders. "Solche 'Exusia', solche Haltung war ihnen unheimlich, befremdlich, unerlaubt, frevelhaft. Darum wurde er verworfen und verurteilt." (p.108)

Jesus' discussions with his adversaries rising from his "transgressions" of the Law are particularly instructive. The accusations of sabbath transgression concentrate mainly on two points: Jesus' healings and the disciples' plucking ears of corn on the seventh day<sup>1</sup>. For Jesus the basic question is: "Is it permitted to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?"

In Mt. 12,11; Lk. 13,15; 14,5 Jesus appeals to the oral Law in order to defend his healings on the Sabbath day. According to tradition it was allowed to help an animal out of a ditch on a Sabbath provided that it was either in severe pain or danger of death<sup>2</sup>. According to the Pharisees however this law was not applicable in the present case because there was no emergency, Jesus could have waited with his work until the following day. So the ultimate justification for the transgression of the Sabbath Law lies not in some commandment, but in Jesus' mission to do good and to loosen from the bondage of Satan<sup>3</sup>. To postpone this salvation only for one day would be equivalent to the doing of evil. So it is love, the doing of good as manifested in the healings, which has priority over the Sabbath law as understood by the Jews.

There are several differences in the healings reported in the fourth Gospel. Two actions connected with the healings seem to have aroused the protest of the Pharisees; in the first instance the carrying around of the pallet by the healed man<sup>4</sup>, and in the second instance the making of clay by Jesus for the anointing of the blind's eyes<sup>5</sup>. Only in the first passage mentioned we hear about a discussion on Sabbath transgression following the healing. Here Jesus gives as the only justification of his work his union with God, his imitating the Father. What the Son sees the Father doing, that the Son does likewise. Consequently, he is working because the Father is still working<sup>6</sup>.

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1) Sabbath healings are related in Mk. 3,1-6 (par. Mt. 12,9-14; Lk. 6,6-11), further in Lk. 13,10-17 and 14,1-6.

2) Branscomb, op.cit. p. 222 f.

3) Lk. 13,16

4) Joh. 5,8. the healed man must have carried his pallet through the streets, because the carrying of a load in the house was not forbidden on the Sabbath.

5) Joh. 9,11.14

6) Joh. 5,19.17

With this answer Jesus doubled his sin in the eyes of the Pharisees, because beside transgressing the Sabbath he made "himself equal with God"<sup>1</sup>. The relation of this answer to Jesus' work on the Sabbath is not so obvious as in the Synoptics, but the verbs used in the Greek give us the clue to a right understanding<sup>2</sup>. The Jews persecuted Jesus because of his "doing" (ποιεῖν). But God's work is exactly this "doing" in a specific sense, he gives the dead life (ζωοποιεῖν). The healing of the paralyzed man points to the eschatological resurrection of the dead. This is confirmed by another word: Jesus said to the sick man "rise" (ἐγείρε v.8). This verb is taken up in v.21: "As the Father raises (ἐγείρει) the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will." So this healing on the Sabbath day is a witness of God's life-giving work which will finally result in the raising of the dead. Though the stress in this story lies on Jesus' union with the Father and his divine authority, the work done on the Sabbath is a work of supreme love towards a hopelessly sick man and becomes the symbol of the resurrection.

Jesus in his discussion with the scribes and Pharisees did not discuss the Sabbath legislation theoretically but demonstrated his freedom to work on the Sabbath day, i.e. to do good. This is the case in the argument following the plucking of ears of corn by Jesus' disciples, though at first sight the passage may give another impression<sup>3</sup>. There are remarkable differences between the Synoptics which cannot here be dealt with. The fullest account is found in Matthew. There we note four different points brought in by Jesus against the accusation of the Pharisees. The last one is the clearest and has undoubtedly relevance for the other points too: "The son of man is lord of the sabbath". The Son of Man, the Messiah, stands with divine authority above the Sabbath. Ultimately the Law is subject to him and not he to the law.

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1) Joh. 5,18

2) see G. Spörri, Das Evangelium nach Johannes, Zürich 1950, ad.loc.

3) Mk. 2,23-28; Mt. 12,1-8; Lk. 6,1-5.



This statement is preceded by two quotations from scripture which are intended to justify the action of the disciples. The first argument is derived from the conduct of David who had eaten of the showbread when he was hungry. Daube<sup>1</sup> concludes that Jesus is laying down a halakha, but he thinks that it is a weak one because it is based on a historical example (haggada) instead of an actual precept. Besides, the reference to David "was no proof, technically, that you might, in a similar situation (i.e. feeling hungry), break the Sabbath"<sup>2</sup>. If Jesus really had intended to formulate a halakha according to the manner of the Rabbis, Daube would certainly be right. But how could Jesus quote an Old Testament passage which would "technically" prove nothing? The argument gets its strength from the fourth point mentioned above. As the Messiah, Jesus is David's Lord and his freedom exceeds that of David<sup>3</sup>.

The second point is about the priests who in the temple profane the Sabbath. Daube finds this an argument "far superior to that of David's appropriation of the show bread"<sup>4</sup> because it is based on a definite precept (i.e. that offerings should be brought even on a Sabbath). "The argument is of a kind which no student of halakha could lightly dismiss". Daube's positive statement with relation to the second argument is caused by the same kind of consideration as is his negative statement concerning the first one: he only considers the "technical" and formal side of the halakha. The question however is not whether the Pharisees could acknowledge this reference as a valid halakha, but whether they were ready to acknowledge that "something greater than the temple is here". So the two quotations from the Old Testament are not used as bases for halakhots in a strict sense over against the Rabbinic Sabbath halakhots. They lead the hearers to a decision, i.e. whether

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1) op.cit. p. 68 ff.

2) Daube, op.cit. p.68

3) It is not likely that Jesus alludes to a Rabbinic tradition, saying that David ate the show bread on a Sabbath day (so Rengstorff NTD Lukas-Ev. 6.Aufl. p.83; cf. Str.-B.I 618/9) or that Jesus allowed the eating of corn because there was danger of starvation, as was the case with David according to the same Rabbinic tradition.

4) op.cit. p. 70



they are ready to acknowledge Jesus as David's lord and as something greater than the temple<sup>1</sup>.

The last argument considered is the quotation of Hos. 6,6. Because of their lack of mercy, the Pharisees condemn the guiltless. It is Jesus' love for the hungry disciples (as it was on other occasions his love for the sick) which allowed them to pluck the ears of corn and now defends them against the accusations of the Pharisees.

To sum up, in his transgressions of the Sabbath law and the discussions connected with them, Jesus makes clear that he, as the Son of Man, is not bound by the Sabbath regulations<sup>2</sup>, but in divine freedom reveals himself as the Lord of the Sabbath. This freedom however is not a freedom of arbitrary action, but he is guided by divine love and mercy and thus establishes a token of God's merciful work in this world, which will be crowned by the resurrection of the dead.

It is sometimes thought that Jesus confirmed the moral law, but abrogated the ceremonial commandments. This view cannot be maintained in face of the facts. Jesus does not make such a differentiation. He does not question circumcision, offerings, and the paying of tithes. His criticism in Mt. 23,23-24 is not directed towards the tithing of mint, dill and cummin, but against the neglect of the weightier demands of the Law. It is however a fact that especially the ceremonial law tended to divert the attention from the basic commandments, with the result that Jesus, like the Old Testament Prophets, inveighs against this misunderstanding even to the point of practically abrogating the Law of purification and the precepts concerning forbidden food. On the other hand he

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1) cf. Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium des Matthäus, p.184: "Weil Jesus bestimmt ist, beides, Priestertum und Tempel, aufzulösen, darum werden in dieser Lage die zu Kronzeugen, die Er zu überwinden bestimmt ist; oder positiv: Weil in dem neuen Aeon, den Er bringt und ist, alle Priester sind, sind schon jetzt durch die priesterliche Vorschrift die Jünger als die künftigen Priester gerechtfertigt."

2) which are never described as mere human tradition! see p. 132.

abolished also the "moral commandments" of retaliation, document of divorce and oath<sup>1</sup>.

We cannot say either that Jesus defended the Mosaic Law in principle over against the traditions of the ancients, although in some disputes this point is really at stake, e.g. Mt. 15,1-9. But in general we have to admit that "Jesus was not opposed to the oral law as such, nor did he repudiate it as a whole. The distinction which he drew was not between oral and written Torah but between those precepts in both which his prophetic consciousness affirmed as the primary will of God and others of a secondary or contradictory nature."<sup>2</sup> In certain cases Jesus even refers to the oral law in order to justify actions which according to the adversaries were transgressions of the Law<sup>3</sup>. Occasionally Jesus himself does not take the Fifth Commandment into account<sup>4</sup>. This attitude has to be explained with his argument used in the question of Sabbath transgression, but altered according to the situation: the Son of Man is sovereign even over the honour due to parents.

#### 4. Jesus and the Decalogue.

##### a) Extraordinary estimation of the Decalogue?

From the previous investigation it has become clear that Jesus' attitude towards the Law cannot be explained on the assumption that he unconditionally acknowledged a certain group of commandments (e.g. the so-called moral law) and rejected another group of precepts (e.g. ceremonial Law or traditions of the ancients, i.e. the oral law). He is convinced that he must proclaim and do God's will and consequently abrogates or

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- 1) cf. Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p.12: "Ausgeschieden sind aus den Forderungen Gottes alle kultischen und rituellen Bestimmungen". This conclusion is not drawn by Jesus or made obvious in his general practice, though his attitude tended in this direction.
  - 2) Branscomb, op.cit. p.173; see also p. 170 ff and 265.
  - 3) ib. p. 220 ff.
  - 4) Mt. 10,35-37; 8,21-22.

relativizes those commandments which do not seem to agree with this divine will and the new situation of the present kingdom. On the other hand he maintains and radicalizes commandments from the moral, ceremonial and oral law if they are considered as expressions of God's will.

Now we have to ask whether for Jesus the Decalogue as a whole was considered as a code to serve as ultimate embodiment of God's demand and was thus not subject to the criterion which he applied to the other commandments. The controversies about Jesus' transgressions of the Fourth Commandment appear to be evidence against this possibility. It is nevertheless a widespread opinion that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount interpreted the Decalogue (and thus sanctioned it, elevating it over other commandments)<sup>1</sup>, and that he pointed the rich youth who asked about the way to win eternal life to the Decalogue as the way to this life<sup>2</sup>. In this section we have therefore to direct our attention especially to these two passages.

#### b) The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount?

In the six antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus does not intend to give an explanation of the Decalogue, but to show the attitude of those standing under God's love and forgiveness. For this demonstration he chooses two commandments of the Decalogue (six and seven), the law of divorce<sup>3</sup>, the law about swearing and oaths<sup>4</sup>, the law of retaliation<sup>5</sup> and the commandment to love one's neighbour<sup>6</sup> which seemed to imply the permission (or even the injunction?) to hate one's enemy<sup>7</sup>. We cannot

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1) e.g. W. Elert, Das christliche Ethos, Tübingen 1949 p.85.

2) Mk. 10,17-27 par. 3) Deut. 24,1

4) Lev. 19,12; Num. 30,3; Dt. 23,22.

5) Ex. 21,23-25; Lev. 24,19-20 6) Lev. 19,18

7) We shall not enter here into the discussion whether all the antitheses originate from Jesus or whether some - as has been suggested with fair probability - are constructions of the former Rabbi Matthew. See e.g. E.v. Dobschütz, Matthäus als Rabbi und Katechet, ZNW 1928 p.342.

discover any compelling reason why Jesus chose just these commandments from the Pentateuch. He could have demonstrated the new order in connexion with other commandments as well. Perhaps he picked out these precepts in particular because the questions concerned were of special interest in the thinking and practice of his contemporaries, or because he thought them especially suitable to contrast his own teaching. At any rate there is no question of Jesus' intending to give an interpretation of the Decalogue and thus elevating it above the other commandments of the Pentateuch.

The strong antithesis: "You have learned that our forefathers were told... but I say to you..." may not be overlooked. Daube<sup>1</sup> compares the antitheses with Midrashic exposition of Old Testament sayings and concludes that Matthew in his composition followed a Rabbinic model. The Rabbinic equivalent would be: "I hear, I might understand according to the literal meaning... but thou must say..." He notes however a considerable difference. The tone in Jesus' teaching "is not academic, but final, prophetic", without any reasoning. "The setting in life of the Rabbinic form is dialectic exposition of the Law; that of the Matthean is proclamation of the true Law."<sup>2</sup> After this statement however Daube relativizes the difference between the Matthean and rabbinic forms: "The relationship between the two members of the (Matthean) form is not one of pure contrast". Jesus' demand "is the revelation of a fuller meaning for a new age."<sup>3</sup> The antitheses are examples "to illustrate the position of Jesus as upholder, not destroyer of the Law."<sup>4</sup> Daube demonstrates his interpretation in relation to the first antithesis. The demonstration would not have been so easy with regard to the 3d, 5th and 6th antitheses!

Though it may be true to some extent that "Matthew's is a Rabbinic gospel"<sup>5</sup> we dare not forget that the impression made by Jesus' teaching

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1) Daube, op.cit. p. 55 ff

3) ib. p.60

5) ib. p.60

2) ib. p.58

4) ib. p. 55

was quite extraordinary. "The crowds were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes"<sup>1</sup>. People obviously noticed a greater difference between the two kinds of teaching than Daube is ready to admit. As to this reaction of the crowds Daube elsewhere submits that by "their scribes" were not denoted the ordained Rabbis, but a lower rank of unordained bible-teachers. According to this interpretation, Jesus was not compared with the Rabbis (the hakhamim, who really had authority through their ordination), but with the scribes (sopherim, inferior teachers). As Jesus, like the unordained scribes, was not expected to teach with authority (reshut), his actual instruction caused astonishment<sup>2</sup>. Whatever may have been the original notion behind the words "authority" and "scribes", the writers of the Gospels undoubtedly intended to compare Jesus with the Rabbis and not to equate him with the scribes in the sense of "the teachers of lower standing."

The "ego"<sup>3</sup> makes clear that Jesus does not consider himself a Rabbi giving an interpretation of divine commandments, but in obvious distinction to what the forefathers (in the pre-messianic period) were told, he proclaims the "new law" of the messianic period with divine authority<sup>4</sup>.

1) Mt. 7,28-29

2) Daube, op.cit. p.205 ff.

3) see p. 135 f.

4) "Dies λέγω ὑμῖν schliesst eine Epoche ab in der Geschichte der Religion und Ethik, es schafft eine neue Situation." E. Stauffer, ThWNT II 345. cf. Wendland, Geschichtsanschauung... p.73: "In den 'Ich-aber sage-euch' Worten stellt Jesus... den Anspruch auf, der kommende Weltrichter und der Messias des Reiches Gottes zu sein."

It has been conjectured that Matthew with the composition of the five antitheses intended to put Jesus over against Moses, thus depicting a 'new Sinai'. (e.g. H.Windisch, Der Sinn der Bergpredigt, p.46.49-52). This suggestion is based on the right conception that Jesus is not just described as an interpreter of the Mosaic Law, but as a new law-giver. But the great difference may not be overlooked. The Decalogue is a code which contains the most basic precepts of the mosaic period, whereas Jesus gives only some examples how the perfect man is expected to act. Lohmeyer's view is not convincing that "the second table of the Decalogue is dimly visible through the ordering of the antitheses." (Ev. Matth. p. 116).

c) The Decalogue as way to eternal life?

Let us now consider the theory that Jesus in his answer to the rich man pointed to the Decalogue as to the way of life<sup>1</sup>. The tradition is not unanimous in the rendering of this story. We notice a different formulation of the question:

Mk + Lk: "Good Master, what must I do to win eternal life?"

Mt: "Master, what good must I do to gain eternal life?"

After a remark about the word "good", Jesus goes on:

Mk + Lk: "You know the commandments..."

Mt: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

"Which commandments?" he asked. Jesus answered...

Matthew (according to his theology) has inserted a short dialogue to stress the keeping of the commandments. According to all writers, Jesus cites several precepts. Which ones? There is an agreement that he pointed to several commandments of the Decalogue, but not exclusively:

Mk: Decal. 6, 7, 8, 9, do not defraud, 5

(Some manuscripts have "do not fornicate" instead of "do not murder" e.g. D Ir). "Do not defraud" is omitted by B W and other authorities. Several manuscripts reverse 6 and 7, e.g. K and Θ.

Lk: Decal. 7, 6, 8, 9, 5

Mt: Decal. 6, 7, 8, 9, 5, Lev. 19,18

(Lev. 19,18 is omitted in some manuscripts).

This short survey makes it clear that Jesus did not point the questioner to the Decalogue as such, but obviously to commandments which show the duty towards one's neighbour<sup>2</sup>. As this duty is summarized very clearly

1) Mk. 10,17-22; Mt. 19,16-22; Lk. 18,18-23.

2) It is possible that "do not defraud" (= do not withhold, sc. the wages) stands for the Tenth Commandment. See E. Klostermann, Markusev. 1950 p. 102; J. Schniewind, Markusev. 1960 p.103. Cf. Grant, The Decalogue in early Christianity HThR XL/1 1947 p.4.

There is no indication why the Fifth Commandment is put at the end of the enumeration.



in the second table of the Decalogue, it is not surprising that Jesus uses five commandments (according to D Ir in Mk four commandments) of this summary, adding according to Mk: do not defraud (D Ir instead of "do not murder" read "do not fornicate"), according to Mt.: Lev.19,18.

This diversity in the account of Jesus' answer is evidence that he did not handle the Decalogue as a ready-made code, applicable to such situations as this. On the other hand it is quite comprehensible that he used commandments from this code, if not all of them and not exclusively, to fix his questioner's attention on the point he wanted to make, i.e. his duty towards his neighbour.

But this is not the main point. The story does not end here. These commandments, however important they are, form only the introduction to Jesus' answer: "One thing you lack". As the story goes on to show, it was just the basic thing which the man was lacking, a thing without which the keeping of the Old Testament commandments, even those of the Decalogue, do not lead to eternal life<sup>1</sup>.

Jesus is asking three things from the rich man: "Sell everything you have, give it to the poor, come, follow me." In the light of the preceding research it is not difficult to see the meaning of this demand. One can "keep" the commandments (Jesus does not deny that the rich man did) without being ultimately and radically bound either to God or to the neighbour. But in the new age of the imminent Kingdom of God it is precisely this ultimate and radical bond that matters. Notwithstanding his outward righteousness the rich man was in reality a slave of his wealth and therefore not free to give himself to God, to follow Jesus. His love of his possessions prevented him from loving God with

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1) Here we disagree with many interpreters of this story. See e.g. M. Albertz, Botschaft des Neuen Testaments II/1 Zollikon-Zürich 1954 p.291: "Nicht bloss der Reiche ist der Meinung, dass die Erfüllung der Gebote Gottes der Weg zur ewigen Seligkeit ist, sondern auch Jesus selbst Mk. 10,17-20."

his whole heart. He refrained from stealing, but he was not ready to give his possessions to the poor which would be the expression of his love to the neighbour. Jesus had come to this man and he loved him.<sup>1</sup> The only adequate answer would have been to come to Jesus ("come, follow me!") and to love him and the neighbour (the poor) in return. But the rich man was not able to do that. "His face fell and he went away with a heavy heart". He had met eternal life (not in the Decalogue, but in Jesus), but he had not won it. It was offered to him, but he was not able to accept it.

The rendering of the story according to Matthew is a little different. The rich man himself asks, "Where do I still fall short?"<sup>2</sup> Jesus answers, "If you would be perfect, go, sell, etc." This cannot mean however that according to Matthew the rich man has already done what is necessary to have eternal life, but is shown here something which might give him an additional benefit<sup>3</sup>. The word perfect (τέλειος) in Matthew is used to show the attitude of the disciple (= the Church) who stands in the new reality, in contradistinction to the "righteousness" of the Pharisees<sup>4</sup>. Thus the story of the rich man, far from suggesting that the Decalogue is the way to eternal life, proves that salvation is only possible through repentance, which, for the rich man, would have signified to follow Jesus.

In conclusion it may be stated that Jesus does not give the Decalogue an extraordinary place in his teaching. He never mentions it as a whole and does not refer to it when asked about the greatest commandment. It would of course be wrong to think that Jesus in any way did not esteem the commandments of the Decalogue. There is no doubt that theoretically he would have acknowledged them as an expression of God's will like the

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1) Mk. 10,21

2) Mt. 19,20

3) The doctrine of supererogatory works which plays an important part in the R.C. Church has no warrant whatever in this story.

4) compare Mt. 5,20 with 5,48. Bultmann (Theol.N.T. p.572) contends that τέλειος in Mt. 19,21 has another meaning than in 5,48 (i.e. perfect in the sense of perfectionism), but this has to be considered as a mere conjecture.

other Old Testament Commandments, but practically they are submitted to the same criterion as the whole Law: the Son of Man is lord over the law - this is expressly stated with regard to the Fourth Commandment! - and he has the right to suspend the Fifth Commandment<sup>1</sup> which right is not conceded to the Pharisees.

d) Matthew 5, 17-19.

We cannot conclude our chapter without giving our attention to this difficult text. These verses seem to contradict everything we have found out so far concerning Jesus' attitude to the Law. Marcion briefly exchanged the verbs in v. 17: "I have not come to complete, but to abolish". The Ebionites changed it to: "I have come to abolish the sacrifices". We mention only two opinions of modern interpreters: "It is very difficult to believe that Jesus can have uttered so emphatic and theoretic an affirmation of the permanence and inviolability of the Law"<sup>2</sup>. "... angesichts anderer Jesusworte und angesichts des tatsächlichen Verhaltens Jesu unmöglich ein echtes Wort."<sup>3</sup>. Innumerable attempts at interpretation have been made, and it cannot be our task here to give a full account of the exegetical work already done on this passage. But some clarification is necessary, because these verses are often quoted without taking into account what they really imply. The current interpretations can be divided roughly into three groups:

- 1) The sayings of Jesus in Mt. 5,17-19 have absolute preponderance over against all the other accounts concerning his attitude towards the Law. This means that he stood quite definitely within the rabbinic tradition and was even more conservative than the Pharisees. This view was put forward by several Jewish authors in the last century<sup>4</sup>.
- 2) These verses are not authentic sayings of Jesus, but reflect the theology of the Palestinian Church of later decades, formulated in

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1) see p. 152

2) Montefiore, Syn. Gosp. II p.46; cf. Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teaching, p.37

3) Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p.15

4) see J.Ph.Glock, Die Gesetzesfrage im Leben Jesu und in der Lehre des Paulus, 1885.

the discussion with Paul or other Hellenistic Christian missionaries<sup>1</sup>.

3) Most of the commentaries try to give an interpretation of Mt.5,17-19 with the aim of harmonizing these sayings with the other words of Jesus about the Law. This is not too difficult with regard to verse 17 (though the interpretations of the term πληρῶσαι vary greatly), but the real difficulties arise with the verses 18-19. None of these interpretations are really satisfactory. The actual words are either given a meaning which can hardly be accounted for and must - to say the least - be considered as biased, or some point in these verses is stressed so much that the other parts are overlooked<sup>2</sup>.

V. 17 does not present too great a difficulty if the verb "fulfil" (πληρῶσαι) can be understood in the sense of Rom. 13,10, where love is called the fulfilment (πλήρωμα) of the Law. In this case the question whether Jesus intended to say that he came to fulfil the Law through his teaching (reveal the real and full meaning of the Law) or by his acts (showing the original intention of the Law by doing it) is not relevant. He did actually both. This word may have been spoken in order to repudiate the accusation that he was an antinomian. Even if it should be considered as a formulation of Matthew or his Church it is not necessarily in contradiction with Paul's teaching<sup>3</sup>, provided it is understood in the light of Jesus' attitude towards the Law in general and not in connexion with the following verses 18 and 19.

V. 18. The real trouble in the interpretation arises here, because Jesus as a matter of fact abolished several Old Testament commandments, either by his teaching or by transgressing them and afterwards by justifying his actions. As this saying of v. 18 has parallels in rabbinic tradition<sup>4</sup> it is hardly possible to give it here another

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1) e.g. Kümmel, Bultmann, Bornkamm, Montefiore, Branscomb.

2) This last instance is very striking in Ljungman's study, *Das Gesetz erfüllen*, Lund 1954. Ljungman emphasizes so much the connexion between πληρῶσαι and δικαιοσύνη (v.20) that he makes the reader almost forget what is said about the iota and the dot!

3) cf. Rom. 4,31; 13,10

4) Pal.San. II 20 c; Exod. Rabba on 6,72b; see page 52 n.10

interpretation, which would be in contradiction with the original meaning in Judaism<sup>1</sup>. The fact that Luke has this word too, though in a slightly different form, excludes the possibility of Matthew being its inventor. Perhaps it is drawn by both from Q. But that does not explain the circumstances of its formulation. It is not impossible that it was taken over by the Palestinian Church - consciously or unconsciously - from the rabbinic tradition in order to justify their attitude towards the Hellenistic Church<sup>2</sup>.

V. 19. Even if it may be ventured to give v. 18 a forced symbolical interpretation, this is almost impossible with verse 19. The "least commandments" was a quite definite notion in Judaism and cannot here mean something different without allusion to its new use. This verse contains the direct opposite to Jesus' other words about the Law and especially to his principle of using the two great commandments as a criterion over against the bulk of other commandments. If this word is a formulation of the Palestinian Church in vindicating her obedience to the Law and attacking the free practice of the Hellenistic Church, she is not only at variance with Paul, but with Jesus himself. The question remains, how Matthew was able to present these alleged sayings of Jesus as introduction to the antitheses.

As already mentioned, verses 18 and 19 have been given the most contradictory interpretations. Some theologians have even found the Decalogue in them. The Didascalia sees in the iota (which in Hebrew is used for the number 10) the Ten Commandments. It is hardly necessary to waste a word on this allegorical "exegesis".

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- 1) This verse is sometimes compared with Mt. 24,35 with the intention to show that Jesus attributed perpetuity to his words but not to the Law. It is however doubtful whether Mt. 5,18 makes allusion to any temporal limitation of the Law. cf. Moore, Judaism I p.269: "until heaven and earth pass away, that is, never; Job 14,12."
  - 2) cf. the conclusion of W.G. Kümmel (Jesus und der jüdische Traditions-gedanke ZNW 1934 p.105 ff): Mt. 5,18 = Lk.16,17 kann unmöglich Jesu Meinung wiedergeben, die deutlich von der jüdischen Gesetzesanschauung stark abweicht. Man wird deshalb Mt. 5,18 für eine judenchristliche Sekundärbildung halten müssen."



There exists, however, another interpretation which has to be dealt with, not because of the strength of its argument, but because of the authority of the interpreters. It is incomprehensible how a scholar like Ad. Schlatter<sup>1</sup> can declare in relation to v. 19: "Diese kleinsten Gebote sind das allen bekannte Hauptstück des geschriebenen Gesetzes, der Dekalog. Dass der Dekalog die Basis der Gemeinde sei, war die allgemein gültige Ueberzeugung." This "general conviction" is proved by a quotation from Josephus (!), and Schlatter does not deem it necessary to give any exegetical reason for his interpretation.

His exegesis is taken over by Schrenk<sup>2</sup> who at least gives an explanation for his theory, so that it is possible to enter into discussion. "Da die Rabbinen nicht reden von kleinsten und grössten, sondern von leichten und schweren, geringen und wichtigen Geboten, werden hier die Worte des Dekalogs gemeint sein als die räumlich kürzesten in der Schriftrolle."<sup>3</sup>

We must reject this interpretation on the following grounds:

1. It is true that the Rabbis usually speak about light and weighty commandments, but Daube<sup>4</sup> points to a text where the terms great and small are used alternatively<sup>5</sup>. This Midrash explains that God did not reveal to His creatures the reward for each separate precept, so that they may perform all the precepts without questioning. Therefore do not say "seeing that this precept is a great one, I will perform it because its reward is great, and seeing that the other precept is a minor one, I will not perform it." Later on the text reads: "So God did not reveal the reward of the precepts, except of two, the weightiest and the least weighty."

1) Der Evangelist Matthäus

2) ThWNT II p. 544.

3) cf. Calvin, CR 45,172: "Hic nominatim loquitur Christus de praeceptis vitae vel decem verbis, ad quorum praescriptum omnes Dei filios vitam suam formare decet."

4) op.cit. p. 119

5) Midr. Rabbah on Dt. 22,6



But in the Gospel according to Matthew itself is found an alternative use of terms, which should have prevented Schrenk from drawing his conclusion<sup>1</sup>. In Mt. 23,23 the word weighty (βαρύς) is used, whereas according to 22,37 Jesus is asked about the greatest (μεγίστη) commandment. The Hebrew termini technici "qal" and "hamur", besides light and weighty, are occasionally understood in the sense of easy and burdensome<sup>2</sup>. In our present text however we have to do with the first sense of the terms.

2. It would be difficult to prove that either in the Bible or in Rabbinism the terms great and small are ever used to show the length of a sentence expressing a certain commandment. Moreover, if the notion "least commandments" would mean "shortest commandments", the pun in v. 19 would be missed. It is certainly not the meaning, that he who sets aside the commandments in question will be the shortest (a dwarf?) in the kingdom of heaven.
3. From a theological point of view this interpretation is quite impossible. How could Jesus (or Matthew) ever think of the one who abolishes the Commandments of the Decalogue as being found in the kingdom of heaven, even in the lowest place, whereas he who sneers at his brother<sup>3</sup> has to enter the fire of hell?

It will have become clear that the interpretation of Schlatter and Schrenk is untenable. The expression "least commandments" applies to certain commandments of the ceremonial Law<sup>4</sup>.

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- 1) Schrenk refers to F. Dibelius, Zwei Worte Jesu, I, Die Kleinsten Gebote in ZNW 1910 p. 188 ff, who finds also the Decalogue in Mt. 5,19, because in this verse "können nur räumlich kleine Vorschriften gemeint sein."
  - 2) Daube, op.cit. p. 120
  - 3) Mt. 5,22
  - 4) so Montefiore, Daube, Abrahams

### 5. Summary and conclusion.

The aim of this paragraph was to seek to discover in the Gospels the same items which were essential for Paul's conclusions concerning the significance of the Law and its validity (or invalidity) for the Gentile Churches<sup>1</sup>. There is no doubt that Paul did not invent the "lawfree Gospel" but that he took up a course which had already been set by Jesus<sup>2</sup>. If it is not man's attitude towards the Law which determines his relation to God, the Judaistic hope (to attain righteousness by means of the Law) has no

1) see p. 129.

2) cf. Kümmel, Jesus und Paulus, ThBl.1940 Sp.209 ff: "Wenn auch Paulus einen Zusammenhang sieht zwischen Sünde und Gesetz (Rö. 7,7 ff) der Jesus fremd ist, so haben doch Jesus wie Paulus in gleicher Weise im Gesetz Gottes Offenbarung gesehen, aber mit dem Anbruch der messianischen Zeit das Ende des Gesetzes gekommen und damit die Gültigkeit des Gesetzes als Heilsweg aufgehoben gewusst." (Sp. 223).

Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus, in: Glauben und Verstehen, ges. Aufsätze 1929, p.191: "Eine weitgehende sachliche Uebereinstimmung der Theologie des Paulus mit der Verkündigung Jesu liegt... in der Lehre vom Gesetz." According to Bultmann, Jesus presupposes the validity of the Law for his time because he preached the kingdom of God as coming which implies that after its coming the Law will not have the old sense. "Jedenfalls enthalten Jesu Worte nur die Anschauung, dass jetzt, also für diesen Aeon, das Gesetz gilt. Und bestreitet Paulus diesen Satz? Im Gegenteil." (p.192).

This interpretation has to be seen in relation with Bultmann's peculiar idea about the future coming of the Son of Man. He is of the opinion that Jesus did not consider himself the "Son of Man" but announced him and expected him in the near future; see Theol. N.T. p. 8 and 26-34. So Bultmann has a sort of vacuum between the old and the coming ages; cf. p.4 ("Aber deutlich ist, dass Jesus der Gewissheit ist: diese Weltzeit ist abgelaufen") with p. 6 ("Das alles bedeutet nicht, dass die Gottesherrschaft schon Gegenwart ist; es besagt aber, dass sie im Anbruch ist.")

In our previous investigation we have stressed the actual presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus much more than Bultmann does. (See H.D. Wendland, Die Mitte der paulinischen Botschaft, Göttingen 1935, who corrects Bultmann in this respect, p.24). According to Bultmann

foundation. Jesus made it unmistakably clear that not the keeping of the Law as such led to eternal life, but the acceptance of the Kingdom of God. This acceptance of the kingdom however meant the acceptance of Jesus: to come to him, to accept his forgiveness, to follow him, to submit oneself to his radical claim. In him, in his person are embodied God's gift and demand. He traces back the many commandments of the Old Testament to the Double Commandment of Love, which is revealed as the fundamental and ultimate demand, not only formally, but substantially, because love, starting from the heart, engages man totally and radically. Let us start from the question: Where is God's will revealed, and how is it recognized by man? The answer we are led to runs as follows: God's will is revealed in Jesus, and therefore it is recognized by knowing him and learning from him. This happens in the following way:

#### Jesus

basic: Double Commandment of Love

interpreted

by his life: <u>example</u> to be imitated	by his <u>words</u> : concrete direction to be obeyed
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Jesus only wanted to interpret the Law: "dem Recht wird der eigentliche Gotteswille gegenübergestellt" p. 193, cf. 197 in the above mentioned article. But whether we call his attitude towards the Law "interpretation" or something else we have to admit that the Law in its old form is superseded.

As a matter of fact Jesus' attitude towards the Law can be understood much better if we recognize in him the bringer of the new age, cf. H.D. Wendland, *Geschichtsanschauung...* p.73: "Jesu Stellung zum Gesetz der Alten ist klar und logisch, d.h. theologisch, aus der Tatsache des gegenwärtigen Sich-Ineinanderschiebens von neuem und altem Aeon entwickelt. Gottes Handeln ist jetzt ein neues (Lk. 16,16a). In der neuen Forderung aber ist die alte aufbewahrt, und im Tun der neuen Gerechtigkeit die alte aufgehoben und erfüllt. Damit ist schon die Dialektik der paulinischen Geschichtstheologie vorgezeichnet. Das Kommen der Gottesherrschaft weist dem Gesetz seinen geschichtlichen Ort neu an. Es wird heilsgeschichtlich begrenzt und verwandelt."

For the Jews God's will was exclusively revealed in the Torah, but now in Jesus there has appeared a new source of revelation. God's will as revealed by Jesus does not necessarily coincide with the whole of the Old Testament Law. It is true that the Jews had already been given the two commandments of love, but they were not understood in their radical sense. Other commandments, given to them because of the "hardness of their hearts", relativized God's ultimate demand, and sin hindered the doing of God's will. This situation has changed with the coming of Jesus, and though he does not theoretically deal with the question of the Old Testament Law, nevertheless certain parts of the Law appear to be relativized or even abrogated by him.

For Paul the basis for Christian life is also forgiveness, acceptance of the divine gift of life as offered in the proclamation of the Gospel, and baptism. Acceptance of the Gospel, faith, baptism, justification, correspond to repentance and the "coming to Jesus" in the Gospels. The new man, the new creature is of course expected to live according to God's will. But where is this will revealed to him and how can he recognize it? The answer is the same as in the Gospels: God's will is made known in Christ.

Here we could draw the same scheme as above (p.165). Jesus Christ is the source of our knowledge of God's will. Love for Paul is the central commandment, the fulfilment of the Law. This love is interpreted by Jesus' life, therefore Paul exhorts all Christians to imitate Jesus. It is also interpreted by Jesus' words, but here Paul does not just quote as many sayings of Jesus as possible, because these sayings are not considered as a new Torah, they must never become "dead letter".<sup>1</sup>

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1) According to Campenhausen, op.cit. p. 36-37 Paul does not base his preaching on quotations because that would be in contradiction to his calling by which Christ has made him an apostle, sending and equipping him directly. This explanation is not very convincing. see also E.J. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ, p.148: "It appears that St. Paul could not detach the words of Jesus from the life of Jesus, as a kind of independent 'ethic', and it is the life of Jesus which he was anxious should be discerned behind that of the Christian."

Jesus is alive and by his Spirit he goes on giving concrete direction, either directly, but more often indirectly in the form of exhortation by the brother.

Jesus who lived among the people of Israel had to deal with Jews who thought they knew everything about God's will because they possessed the Torah. Because Jesus - in the light of the new reality of God's kingdom - declared God's will radically and fundamentally, he inevitably revealed the limitations of the Torah.

Paul who worked among Gentiles had no reason to start in his teaching with the limited Torah; he has not to do with people who lived under the revealed law before the coming of Christ. Therefore his starting point is the new reality created by Jesus' death and resurrection, by his final and ultimate revelation of God's will.

The differences between Paul and Jesus, caused by the different circumstances, are in fact insignificant if compared with the fundamental agreement:

### Jesus

### Paul

#### The new reality:

The kingdom of God is  
among you Lk. 17,21

God was in Christ 2 Cor. 5,19

#### man's answer:

repent and believe the  
Gospel Mk. 1,15

Be reconciled to God! 2 Cor. 5,20

come, follow me! passim

Offer your very selves to God!

Rom. 12,2

#### God's basic demand:

Greatest commandment: Love  
Mk. 12,28 ff. par.

He who loves his neighbour has  
fulfilled the Law.

Rom. 13,8

#### Christ as example:

I am like a servant - be  
like servants! Lk. 22,26-27

imitation of Christ  
§ 8.1 c

Christ (the Spirit) as living guide

You have heard... but I  
say to you!      Mt. 5

In him are hidden all the treasures  
of wisdom and knowledge      Col. 2,3

The requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us if we walk according to  
the Spirit      Rom. 8,4

It has become clear that Paul in his basing man's knowledge of God's demand on the revelation in Jesus Christ does not derive from Jesus himself. But Paul's approach to the question of the Jewish Law is more consistent and less subject to misunderstanding than Jesus' attitude as described in the Gospels. This difference is due to the reasons mentioned in the introductions to § 9 and 10.

Chapter 2: Catechetical teaching in the following centuries.

§ 11. Early Documents and catechetical sermons.

1. The Didache.

The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) is the first catechism from post-New Testament time known to us. In its present form it originates probably from the first half of the 2nd century, according to some scholars from the end of that century. This document seems to have been quite popular as a means for catechetical instruction in the early Church and there is evidence that it was still used for this purpose as late as the fourth century<sup>1</sup>.

In the following we shall deal especially with the first part (chapters 1-6) of this document. The Didache claims to be "The Lord's Teaching to the Heathen by the Twelve Apostles"<sup>2</sup>. Chapter 7, which

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1) see Athanasius, Festal letters ch. 39

2) 1,1



contains the ordinances about baptism, begins with the words: "Give public instruction on all these points and then baptize..."<sup>1</sup> So we have unmistakably to do here with the instruction given to gentiles who approached the Church with a view to being baptized.

When we examine this catechism we come however to the disappointing discovery that we are not facing an instruction based primarily on the New Testament, but a basically Jewish document which is only slightly adapted to Christian use<sup>2</sup>. Chapters 1-6 contain an exposition of the Two Ways, the Way of Life (ch. 1-4) and the Way of Death (ch. 5).

In order to be able to form an opinion about the content of this early Christian catechism we shall first seek an insight into the way Taylor and Harnack try to discover the Jewish form underlying the Didache, which possibly had been used for the teaching of proselytes. By comparing the Two Ways in the Didache with the Two Ways in the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apostolic Constitutions<sup>3</sup>, the Statutes of the Apostles<sup>4</sup> and a Latin Fragment of the Didache, the original text can be identified with considerable certainty<sup>5</sup>. In chapters 1-5, the particular passage 1,3 - 2,1, containing quotations from the Sermon on the Mount and exhortations based on it, must have been inserted by Christians in order to give the Jewish catechism a Christian appearance.

The remaining material as used in Judaism consists of the following parts:

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1) 7,1

2) see C. Taylor, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Cambridge 1886  
Ad. Harnack, *Die Apostellehre und die jüdischen beiden Wege*,  
Leipzig 1886

cf. L. W. Barnard, *The Epistle of Barnabas and the Dead Sea Scrolls: some observations*, SJTh Vol. 13,1 1960 p. 45-59

3) Book 7

4) Chapters 1-14

5) see Harnack, *op.cit.* p. 52 ff: Attempt to reestablish the text of the Jewish Two Ways.

J.P. Audet, *Affinités littéraires et doctrinales du Manuel de Discipline*, Rb 1952 p. 219-238; 1953 p. 41-82.

- Ch. 1,2      Way of Life: Love towards God and the neighbour, Golden Rule in negative form (as found in Tobit 4,15 and taught by Hillel, Babylonian Talmud, Tract on the Sabbath 31 a).
- Ch. 2          Commandments six to ten of the Decalogue mixed with other commandments.
- Ch. 3,1-6      Fence to the Law. Warnings of slight sins lest they should lead to grave sins, e.g. "do not be irritable, for anger leads to murder" (3,2) etc.
- Ch. 3,7-4,14   Various commandments, partially resembling the New Testament Household Rules.
- Ch. 5          Way of death: list of vices and deeds of the wicked.
- Ch. 6          Food precepts.

As already stated, this Jewish catechism was not taken over by the Christians without change. They inserted exhortations from the New Testament, especially from the Sermon on the Mount, between chapter 1,2 and 2,2, but this does not alter in the least the basically Judaistic approach. The Lord appears exclusively as Teacher and Law-giver, nothing is said about justification and new life based on it. We may suppose that the catechumens were taught about some fundamentals of Christian faith<sup>1</sup>, but the ethical teaching has no visible relation at all to this faith. The Jewish exhortations, most of them beginning with "do not", "my child, do not", and "you must (not)" are merely increased by a few more commandments from the Sermon on the Mount.

The whole bulk of commandments is called "the Lord's yoke", and human perfection depends on how far these commandments are fulfilled<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps there is an inner relation between this presentation of the matter and the absence of a direct reference to Christ's body and

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1) see Did. ch. 8-10

2) 6,2

blood in the liturgy of the Eucharist<sup>1</sup>. The stress there lies on God's revelation of life and knowledge (concerning the Two Ways?) through Jesus.

In chapter two, the commandments six to ten of the Decalogue are mentioned among other prohibitions, but the Decalogue is not made the basis or even the guiding principle of the Teaching, as several commandments are merely inserted in the "Way of Death". The basic precepts of the Old Testament Law are not radicalized as in the Sermon on the Mount but provided with a fence<sup>2</sup>, and the commandment of love is modified<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. The Epistle of Barnabas.

The theological tract which goes under the name "The Epistle of Barnabas" was written probably in the first half of the second century with the intention to give the Christian addressees perfect knowledge<sup>4</sup>.

In the first part (ch. 1-17) Barnabas explains that the Old Testament (the Law) is actually not intended for the Jews, but for the Christians. It is to be understood allegorically. The second part (ch. 18-21) contains moral instruction, arranged according to the pattern of the Two Ways, here called the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness. In its content this part agrees with the Didache, but it omits the quotations from the Sermon on the Mount and has quite a different arrangement<sup>5</sup>.

1) ch. 9-10

2) 3,1-6; cf. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 187

3) 2,7

4) 1,5: *ἐκείνων γνώσειν*

5) According to Harnack, Die Apostellehre und die jüdischen beiden Wege, this "disorder" may have been caused by the fact that Barnabas quoted from memory. Karl Thieme, Kirche und Synagoge, p.235 n.88, however, submits that this rearrangement was made in order to get ten commandments, the odd numbers concerning the love towards God, the even ones the love towards the neighbour. This latter theory is not very convincing. The division given by Thieme seems forced. Moreover, if ten commandments were intended, it is inexplicable why there is no connexion with the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue.

Though several of the Ten commandments are quoted or at least alluded to, the whole does not correspond in the least with the arrangement of the Decalogue. The Two Ways are connected with angels: "For over the one are stationed the lightbringing angels of God, and over the other men are the angels of Satan"<sup>1</sup>. In this respect, the Epistle of Barnabas shows closer affinity to the Qumran Manual of Discipline than the Didache<sup>2</sup>.

What has been said with regard to the ethical teaching of the Didache applies also to the Epistle of Barnabas. The Christian life is determined by the Law and here even the insertions of New Testament exhortations are missing. The Christians are admonished to "be good lawmakers to yourselves"<sup>3</sup>. "He that keepeth these (= the judgments, *ἐλαττωματα* of the Lord) will be glorified in the kingdom of God. He that chooseth those (other) things will be destroyed together with his works."<sup>4</sup>

### 3. The Shepherd of Hermas.

This book of revelation, like the Epistle of Barnabas, was composed in the first half of the second century. Of the three parts (Visions, Commandments, Similitudes) it is the second one, the 12 commandments or Mandata, which is relevant to our research. The necessity and urgency of penance having been stressed in the first part (visions), in the subsequent second part the Angel of Penance in the guise of a shepherd gives Hermas 12 elaborated commandments to show how the penitents are to live in order to attain eternal life. Though these precepts to a large extent are based on Jewish tradition<sup>5</sup>, nevertheless there is no similarity at all with the Decalogue. In the beginning of Mandate VI, Hermas touches on the pattern of the Two Ways, but then he changes to the picture of two angels, the angel of justice and the angel of evil who are working in the human heart.

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1) ch. 18

2) see Barnard, op.cit.

3) 21,4

4) 21,1. For Barnabas' peculiar view of the Old Testament see § 12.2 b.

5) see M. Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Tübingen 1923.

#### 4. Baptismal liturgies in the 4th century.

In the history of the catechetical teaching the 4th century is of special interest. First, because it provides more pertinent material than any other period, second because the rite of baptism and preparation for it had reached a certain climax and was not further developed in the following centuries, but was inserted in the medieval Church Orders in a rather contracted form. For our purpose it is not essential to make a thorough study of the baptismal liturgies as used in the 4th century in different Churches, because we are more interested in the contents of the Catechetical Lectures of that time. Nevertheless it might prove useful to depict in broad outline the preparations for baptism as they were in use at that time. This survey is based mainly on the information gathered from the following catechetical lectures<sup>1</sup>:

	lectures delivered		
	<u>before</u>	<u>Easter Eve</u>	<u>after</u>
Chrysostom of Constantinople	2	1	5
Cyril of Jerusalem	19		5
Theodore of Mopsuestia	16		
Ambrose of Milan			1
de Sacramentis (unknown author)			6

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- 1) Jean Chrysostome, Huit Catéchèses Baptismales inédites, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes de Antoine Wenger a.a., Paris 1957. (These catechetical sermons were discovered in 1955 by a French scholar, Antoine Wenger, in the monastery of Stavronikita at Mount Athos. According to Wenger, they were delivered probably in the year 390 in Antioch).
- Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures (delivered in Jerusalem in 347 or 348.  
(W.Telfer, Cyril of Jerusalem, Library of Christian Classics IV)
- Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste  
(Vaticano, Studi e Testi 145)
- St. Ambrose, "On the Mysteries" and the treatise "On the Sacraments"  
by an unknown author, translated by T. Thompson SPCK London  
1919

Beside these catechetical lectures we have other sources of information in the writings of the Church Fathers, in some ancient Church Orders and in the "Pilgrimage of Etheria"<sup>1</sup>. There were several differences in practice between the various traditions (East, Rome, North-Italy, Africa), but we shall not enter into details.

In the Church of the 4th century we can distinguish two groups of people:

- a) the baptised members of the Church (either baptized as Infants, or as adults after the usual preparation, or baptized in emergency without preparation). These are called the faithful (πίστοι), the Christians (χριστιανοί) or the initiates (μεμνημένοι, κληθέντες).
- b) the catechumens (κατηχούμενοι) or non-initiates (ἀμύητοι), forming part of the group of the hearers (ἀκροώμενοι). In Latin they were called catechumeni or audientes.

Anybody who wanted to become a catechumen had to present himself before the bishop or a presbyter. They investigated the motives of his desire and explained to him in a catechetical lecture the main features of the Christian faith.<sup>2</sup> Then the newcomer was marked with the sign of the cross. After the "Prayer of imposition of the hand" there followed the "sacrament" of the giving of salt. These rites were also administered to children of christian parents and could take place at any time of the year. In Africa after this ceremony the catechumen was called a "christian" because he had passed out of the heathen world<sup>3</sup>.

But this entering the state of catechumens often does not mean that the newcomer requires baptism as soon as possible. It may be just a sort of precaution in order that he is in a position to ask for baptism in case of emergency. This very common postponement of baptism (procrastinatio baptismi) was mainly due to the fear that the grace received in the sacrament might be lost again through post-baptismal sins.

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1) in W. Telfer, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. IV p.40 f

2) see Augustine's famous catechesis of admission in 'de catechizandis rudibus'.

3) Aug. In Joan. Ev. Tract. XLIV.2



The usual church-service included two parts: the "missa catechumenorum" and the "missa fidelium". The first part consisted in the teaching of the congregation including the catechumens, intercession for the catechumens and prayer spoken by themselves. After this prayer they had to leave the church, because they were not allowed to attend the sacraments or to overhear the ritual prayers and the explanation of the sacraments.

This discrimination shows the different state of the two groups. The faithful are the real family of God, and therefore they alone may have the knowledge and benefit of the sacraments. Because the catechumens do not have God as their Father, it is impossible for them to say the Lord's Prayer. They cannot join in the hymns which are sung by the faithful in union with the angels, and of course have no part in Holy Communion<sup>1</sup>.

As Easter Eve is the ordinary time of baptism in the Early Church, the preparation of the baptismal candidates takes place during Lent. Less usual times for baptism were Pentecost, and, in the Eastern Church, Epiphany or Christmas. This is the time of moral and intellectual training for the future Christians. Those who apply for baptism have to enrol, and after scrutiny the candidates are registered at the beginning of the forty days. For this group different names were in use: illuminandi (οἱ μέλλοντες φωτίζεσθαι, φωτιζόμενοι) μυούμενοι, βαπτιζόμενοι, competentes, electi. In the following we shall call them candidates and, for the time immediately after baptism, neophytes.

In big places, where the priest did not know the circumstances of the applicants, they had to provide a so-called guarantor<sup>2</sup>, a member of the

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- 1) For the discussion about different stages in the class of catechumens see F.X. Funk, Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen, Paderborn 1897, p. 209-241, and H.J. Holzmann, Die Katechese der alten Kirche, in Theologische Abhandlungen, Carl von Weizsäcker gewidmet, Freiburg 1892, p. 86-93. cf. E. Schwartz, Busstufen und Katechumenatsklassen, Schriften der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Strassburg, H. 7 1911
- 2) ἀναδεχόμενος, πρεσβυτέρου πνευματικός

Church who was responsible for the catechumen and assisted him in the preparation for baptism. After the enrolment, the candidate has to submit himself to the fasting rules, the daily instruction and the special catecheses. These last mentioned catechetical lectures were delivered partly before and partly after baptism<sup>1</sup>.

After every catechesis, the candidates had to present themselves before the exorcists whose task it was to free them from the bondage of the devil and prepare them for the acceptance of their new Lord and King. These exorcisms, also called scrutinies, are not meant as an examination of the candidate only, but also of the devil, whose force has to be broken<sup>2</sup>.

Of special importance was the delivery of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. On a Saturday or Sunday in the second part of Lent the Creed was delivered (traditio symboli) to the candidates which they had to repeat (give back, redditio symboli) a week later whereupon the Lord's Prayer was delivered to them which in turn had to be recited after another week.

Previous to Baptism we have another ceremony: the renouncement of Satan and adherence to Christ. Each candidate had to pronounce the following formula: "I renounce you Satan, and your temptations and your service and all your works - and I join myself to Thee, Christ."

On the Saturday before Easter two unctions took place: The first one was performed by the bishop who marked the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidates while saying: "Such a one is anointed in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost". The candidates are now marked "as sheep of Christ, as soldier of the heavenly King"<sup>3</sup>,

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1) see survey page 173.

2) see J.A. Jungmann, Katechetik, p.8 n.9, and  
A. Dondeyne, La discipline des scrutins dans l'église latine  
avant Charlemagne, in Revue Hist. Eccl. 1932  
p. 5-33 and 751-787.

3) Theodore of Mopsuestia XIII, 17.

"the unction is both oil and perfume: Perfume as to the bride; oil as to the athlete"<sup>1</sup>; the demons are blinded and discouraged from approaching the person thus marked<sup>2</sup>.

The second unction happened on the evening of the same day. The priest took off all the clothes of the candidates, and after that they were anointed from head to feet, the men by deacons, the women by deaconesses. This unction with holy chrism strenghtens all the members of the body and makes them invulnerable against the arrows of the foe<sup>3</sup>. The Fathers are, however, not unanimous in the interpretation of this second unction<sup>4</sup>. Ambrose does not mention the second unction but has in its place the "mystery of the opening (Effeta)" in which the ears of the candidates were touched in order to enable them to hear the words of the priest and to give the right answer<sup>5</sup>.

After the unction of the whole body and the confession of faith the candidates approached the holy font to be baptized. The bishop or the priest put his hand on the head of each, immersing him three times into the holy water while pronouncing the formula of baptism: "Such a one is baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." The candidate dies with Christ and receives the new life which includes all the divine gifts. "The first man was created on the sixth day, the new man is created on the first day at the same time as the light."<sup>6</sup>

After baptism the neophytes were clad in white robes, symbols of the new life, which were worn for seven days (during Easter week). They were blessed and kissed with the holy kiss, and after the saying of the Lord's Prayer they were led to the table of blessing, where they took

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1) Chrysostom, quoted by Wenger, op.cit. p. 146, from the third catechetical lecture in the series of Papadopoulos-Kérameus III p.173,1.22.

2) Chrysostom, Stavronikita II,23      3) ib. II,24

4) cf. Cyril, Mystagogical Catechesis II, Theodore of Mopsuestia XIV.8

5) de Myst. I,3.4

6) Chrys. Serm. on John, PG 59,150.

part in the Holy Communion. The unction after baptism symbolizes the gift of the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>. From Milan and Africa we hear about the rite of the "Washing of the Feet"<sup>2</sup>. In Rome and Africa after baptism the neophytes were given a draught of milk and honey. This was a symbol of the spiritual childhood of the "regenerate" and of the blessings of the "promised land", i.e. the Kingdom of Christ.

#### 5. The contents of the catechetical sermons in the 4th century.

In our study of the baptismal liturgies of the 4th century we saw that the catechumens had to attend special catechetical sermons by the bishop or a priest. These sermons or lectures were delivered partly before and partly after baptism. Let us now consider the contents of these sermons and give special attention to their ethical teaching.

#### a) Chrysostom's eight catechetical sermons (Stavronikita).

##### Summary of the contents.

The first sermon was given at the beginning of the catechetical instruction, i.e. the 10th day of Lent, whereas the second one preceded immediately the baptismal rite at Easter Eve. As Chrysostom speaks somewhere about daily instruction preceding exorcism, we may be certain that these two sermons do not contain the whole preparatory teaching of the catechumens. Wenger supposes that the catechumens during Lent attended the sermons preached to the whole congregation. As example he mentions Chrysostom's sermons on Genesis.

In the first catechetical sermon we can distinguish three parts.

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- 1) Chrysostom does not mention a post-baptismal unction. According to him the Holy Spirit descends upon the neophyte just when he emerges from the baptismal font.
  - 2) According to Ambrose, hereditary sins are removed by this footwashing, whereas the actual sins are remitted by baptism. In "De Sacramentis", however, another explanation is given: footwashing is a means of sanctification and grace, and a lesson in humility. III/i.4.

In the first part, the preparation of the catechumens is compared to the preparation of the bride for the wedding, because baptism is the spiritual wedding of the soul to Christ. Then Chrysostom gives a short exposition of the Creed, and finally he points out what it means in practical life to be a Christian.

The second sermon begins with an elaborate description of God's goodness and grace, and thereafter the Church Father gives an explanation of the different rites which form part of the preparation for baptism. We made use of this in our previous section.

The third sermon is given early in the morning of Easter, immediately after the rite of baptism. Chrysostom is overflowing with joy; he compares the neophytes with stars and shows them the fruits of baptism. Moreover he tells them that they will have to fight against the devil, but Christ is on their side and provides not only the armour, but nourishes them with His own blood.

The following five sermons are not addressed exclusively to the neophytes, but also to the whole congregation which was supposed to gather every day together with the neophytes during Easter week. In these sermons Chrysostom introduces his congregation into the Christian life. He exhorts them to give an adequate response to God's gifts, to live worthy of Him who abides in them, to behave as citizens of the heavenly city, to imitate Christ, Paul, Abraham and all the saints and to let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works and give glory to the Father who is in heaven. They are warned of all aberrations, especially of drunkenness and attending theatres and horse-racing. The last sermon closes with a day-programme for the neophytes to show them how to arrange their life according to God's will.

### The exhortations and their basis.

It has already become clear that Chrysostom lays special emphasis on ethical teaching. But in his exhortations he seems not to be led by a certain code of laws, they are rather caused and shaped by current problems, dangers and temptations. The custom of swearing leads him to quote the Lord's precept about this subject<sup>1</sup>. The make-up of Christian women causes him to speak of the uselessness of exterior decoration and the importance of the beauty of heart<sup>2</sup>. Excesses in eating and drinking give the opportunity of warning against drunkenness, but also against anger and pride which are a sort of spiritual drunkenness<sup>3</sup>. A small attendance at one of the last services in Easter-week proves to the preacher that theatre and horse-races have attracted part of the congregation. So he feels compelled to inveigh against this "satanic theatre" and admonishes those present to recognize their responsibility toward their erring brothers<sup>4</sup>. Many other examples could be added to these.

Let us now turn to the basis of these exhortations. What is the principle of the new life of the neophytes? Why have they to act in a certain way, and how can they know how to behave in the various circumstances of daily life? It is not difficult to discover Chrysostom's view in this matter, because his main concern is just the standard of the new life. A few examples will prove it.

The text of his 4th sermon is 2 Cor. 5,17: "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." Until yesterday the neophytes were slaves of Satan and lived in captivity, but to-day they are sons, they have laid down the burden of sin and are dressed in the royal robe. They even surpass the stars and the sun in their splendour<sup>5</sup>. "For as many of you as

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1) I, 40  
3) V, 2-11  
5) IV, 3

2) I, 34-38  
4) VI, 1-7.14-20



were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"<sup>1</sup>. Chrysostom calls them new soldiers of Christ, whose names have been written in the heavenly city. They are called to the spiritual feast and are going to sit at the royal table. Therefore they are exhorted to show a willingness which responds to the greatness of God's blessings.<sup>2</sup>

God's grace has entered their lives; it has reshaped and converted their souls, changing not the nature, but the will<sup>3</sup>. Therefore "let us forget the past, let us change our lives as citizens called to a new life. In all our words and actions let us consider the dignity of Him who abides in us."<sup>4</sup>

It is the state of being God's children, of heavenly citizenship, of people called after Christ, of forgiven sinners, which calls to a life worthy of this state. Because our dress and our food are spiritual, therefore it is logical that all our works and actions become spiritual too. Here Chrysostom refers to the fruits of the Spirit as mentioned by Paul in Gal. 5,22-23.<sup>5</sup>

Another important point in Chrysostom's exhortations is imitation, especially the imitation of Christ himself. When Christ tells his disciples to take His yoke upon them and to learn from Him<sup>6</sup>, He invites them to imitate Him. "What I expect from you is not difficult. You who are my servants, imitate me who am your teacher."<sup>7</sup> Then the Church Father describes the life of those who imitate the meekness of Christ.

Besides Christ, Paul, the teacher of the universe<sup>8</sup> is presented as the perfect example to the neophytes. The great change in his life shows what God's grace can do in man, and his eagerness, ardour, faith, courage, patience etc. have to be imitated by the neophytes<sup>9</sup>.

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1) Gal. 3,27

3) IV,14

5) IV,27

7) I,29

9) IV, 7-11; V, 19-22.

2) IV,6

4) IV,16

6) Mat. 11,29

8) ὁ τοῦ οἴκου μέγας διδάσκαλος

Elsewhere the Christians are encouraged to take Abraham as their model, because this godly man in the Old Covenant shows how we must cling to God's promises and prefer the spiritual goods to worldly things.<sup>1</sup> Cornelius becomes an example how a soldier can lead a life pleasing to God<sup>2</sup>, and in recent history the holy martyrs are exemplary in despising the goods of this earth because they were seeking those of heaven<sup>3</sup>.

#### The Decalogue in Chrysostom's catechetical sermons.

Chrysostom in his catechetical sermons never quotes the Decalogue or makes any allusion to it. The word Law (*νόμος*) occurs very rarely. When he explains to the catechumens what it means to imitate Christ he quotes some passages from the New Testament. Then he proceeds: "Who has become humble in heart never will envy the goods of the others. He will not steal, nor take advantage of anybody, he will not covet wealth, but will rather abandon what he has, showing a great compassion towards his equals; he will not break the marriage of another. He who, taking the yoke of Christ, has learnt to be meek and humble of heart, will show all virtues and will follow the Master."<sup>4</sup> It is possible that here Chrysostom has some commandments of the Decalogue in mind. But neither does he quote the Old Testament nor does he put forward these things as a law. He just describes what the life of a Christian is like.

In this connexion it is interesting to examine his way of quoting Gal. 5,22-23, which passage closes with the words: "against such there is no law". He remarks: "He (Paul) is right in saying so, for those who are practising the virtue are above (*ἀνωτέροι*) the law and are not subject (*οὐχ ὑπόκεινται*) to the law". Then he quotes 1 Tim. 1,9.<sup>5</sup>

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1) VIII, 7-10

3) VII, 17-19

5) IV,27

2) VII, 28-31

4) I,31

Once the Church Father speaks of the divine law ( $\nu\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu\ \nu\omicron\mu\omicron\nu$ ). It is in the passage where he inveighs against drunkenness<sup>1</sup>. Having quoted 1 Cor. 6,9-10 he proceeds: "Somebody may say: 'What then? Idolaters, adulterers and drunkards alike are ruled out of the Kingdom?' But it is not me who must answer this, my dear. I have only read the divine law..." In this context, 'law' seems to signify rather a divine decision or decree than a commandment.

In III,23-26 Chrysostom compares baptism with Israel's exodus from Egypt. Though he speaks of some of their experiences in the desert, he does not mention the events at Mount Sinai or the Law.

In these eight catechetical lectures there are 28 quotations from the Old Testament, 5 from the Apocrypha, and 84 from the New Testament.

#### b) The catechetical lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem.

##### Summary of the contents.

In his introductory lecture, Cyril speaks about the preparation for baptism. He explains the meaning of exorcism (8), the aim of catechizing (11) and the signification of baptism (16). The candidates are warned not to divulge the teachings to the catechumens, i.e. those who have not yet enrolled for baptism (12).

The first lecture expounds the attitude of mind necessary for Baptism. Repentance, faith and confession are required from the candidates. In the second lecture Cyril goes through the Old Testament to show that every sin may be forgiven if there is true repentance. Lecture three explains the meaning of baptism and the candidates are told how to prepare themselves and how to approach the Sacred Laver.

In lecture four begins the exposition of the Creed. The Christians are in danger of false teaching from the Greeks, the Jews and the Heretics. Therefore they must become strong in faith. To help the more simple

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1) V,11.

to understand, Cyril gives in this lecture a summary of the whole Creed, interspersed by some exhortations. "For the course of godliness is made up of these two: pious doctrines and good works"<sup>1</sup>. This lecture closes with the story of the Septuagint translation, an admonition to read the canonical books of the Bible and a last warning of the many temptations to be faced.

Then, in the lectures V - XVIII we find the explanation of the Creed, divided in the following way:

- V We believe
- VI in One God
- VII the Father
- VIII Almighty
- IX Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible
- X and in One Lord Jesus Christ
- XI the Only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father, Very God, before all worlds, by whom all things are made,
- XII who came in the flesh, and was made man of the Virgin and the Holy Ghost,
- XIII He was crucified and buried
- XIV He rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sat on the right hand of the Father
- XV and He cometh in glory to judge the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end,
- XVI- and in One Holy Ghost, the comforter, who spake in the Prophets
- XVII
- XVIII (and in one Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins)
- and in one Holy Catholic Church
- and in the Resurrection of the dead,
- and in life everlasting.

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1) IV,2

This is a reconstruction of the Creed, used in Jerusalem in the 4th century, based on the lectures of Cyril. The confession about Baptism and repentance is not dealt with in the 18th lecture, because this subject had already been treated in the sermons one to three. The five last lectures<sup>1</sup> are delivered after baptism and explain the Mysteries<sup>2</sup>. Their contents are as follows:

- XIX     On the rites before baptism
- XX     "     "     "     of baptism
- XXI     "     "     holy Chrism
- XXII    "     "     body and blood of Christ
- XXIII   "     "     Eucharist (including a short exposition of the Lord's Prayer).

As Cyril wants his candidates to become strong in faith and able to answer the adversaries of the Church, he gives a very detailed exposition of the Creed and attempts to prove every part by many passages from the Old Testament. Moreover he tries to prove the reality of the truths confessed by pointing to events in nature or even to stories from Greek mythology. Though he says that the course of godliness exists in pious doctrines and good works, he deals relatively little with the latter. His emphasis lies on orthodox doctrine and how it is to be vindicated. So his lectures have a strong apologetic character. But let us now turn to the exhortatory parts of his sermons.

#### The exhortations and their purpose.

In the first three lectures the candidates are exhorted to prepare themselves with due repentance for baptism. They are invited to the marriage feast of the heavenly King. Therefore "begin to wash your

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1) XIX - XXIII

2) According to W. Telfer (The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. IV, Introduction) these mystagogical lectures were probably given by Cyril's successor John, and only later were they connected with Cyril's pre-baptismal lectures and thus attributed to him. We have made use of these mystagogical lectures in our description of the baptismal rites.

robes through penitence, that when summoned to the bride-chamber ye may be found clean."<sup>1</sup> In his second lecture, Cyril tells his pupils how to avoid sin: "Remember the Judgment, and neither fornication, nor adultery, nor murder, nor any unrighteousness shall prevail in thee."<sup>2</sup>

In his teaching about the soul, Cyril maintains that the soul is free to do good or evil and "though the devil can tempt, he is not free to force it against deliberate choice". Only when we admit this fact, it is understandable why God prepared hell for the evil-doer and crowns of glory for the just<sup>3</sup>. This thought is repeated in a later lecture, where Cyril insists on freedom of decision: "We of our own choice have been counted worthy to become the sons of God." Even the conversion of Paul is quoted as an example of free choice!<sup>4</sup>

When speaking about the body, he quotes 1 Cor. 6,19. "Be tender then of thy body, as being the temple of the Holy Ghost; sully not thy flesh with fornication... but if thou hast defiled it, cleanse it now through penitence; while the time allows, wash it."<sup>5</sup>

Obviously the catechumen here is supposed to cleanse himself before baptism through penitence. In connexion with the body Cyril speaks also about the order of Solitaries and Virgins, marriage, eating of meat, and apparel.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth lecture is closed with exhortations to abstain from heathen practices or Jewish observance of Sabbaths and food-precepts. "In every way make thine own soul safe, by fastings, by prayers, by alms, by reading of the divine oracles: that living in soberness and godly doctrine for the rest of thy time in the flesh, thou mayest enjoy the one salvation of the Laver of Regeneration..."<sup>7</sup>

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1) III,2  
3) IV,21  
5) IV,23  
7) IV,37

2) II,2  
4) VII,13  
6) IV,24-29



If we ask Cyril about the motives for good works, we find various answers. Once it is the knowledge that we are God's children which spurs us to walk spiritually; the good works have to be seen by the people and to cause them to glorify the Father in Heaven.<sup>1</sup> But in another lecture we are told that "the root of all good works is the hope of the resurrection; for the expectation of recompense nerves the soul to good works"<sup>2</sup>. This same motive is worked out in connexion with Cyril's explanation of the article about resurrection and last judgment<sup>3</sup>. The thought of the terrible judgment will prevent us from sin: "Let us shudder then, brethren, lest God condemn us!"<sup>4</sup> By baptism all sins are blotted out, but afterwards everything is recorded in heaven, all good deeds as well as all sins, and finally all men will be judged according to their works<sup>5</sup>.

In baptism all sins are forgiven and the soul is cleansed, but afterwards it depends thus on the Christian whether he will inherit everlasting life or not. There is no tension between faith and works as in Paul's epistles. God does his part and man has to do his. Though Cyril does not explicitly state this order, it is the impression one gets from his lectures.

In his last sermon before the baptism of the candidates he speaks again of the way of gaining everlasting life. Curiously enough he asserts that "the ways of finding eternal life are many... for God in His loving-kindness has opened not one or two only, but many doors, by which to enter into the life everlasting."<sup>6</sup> In order to prove this statement, Cyril quotes different passages from the New Testament where life eternal is mentioned, without confronting the texts with each other or asking what may be the meaning of these differences:

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1) VII, 14  
3) XV, 23-26  
5) XV, 23

2) XVIII, 1  
4) XV, 25  
6) XVIII, 31

"When we desire to gain this eternal life, the sacred Scriptures suggest to us the ways of gaining it; of which, because of the length of our discourse, the texts we set before you shall be but few, the rest being left to the search of the diligent. They declare at one time that it is by faith; for it is written, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and what follows; and again He says Himself, Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My words, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and the rest. At another time, it is by the preaching of the Gospel; for He says, that He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal. At another time, by martyrdom and confession in Christ's name; for He says, And he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. And again, by preferring Christ to riches or kindred; And every one that hath forsaken brethren, or sisters, and the rest, shall inherit everlasting life. Moreover it is by keeping the commandments, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, and the rest which follow; as He answered to him that came to Him, and said, Good Master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life? Further, it is by departing from evil works, and henceforth serving God; for Paul says, But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Decalogue in Cyril's catechetical sermons.

Let us begin with the last quotation in our previous paragraph. There Cyril asserts that one of the many ways to gain everlasting life is to keep the commandments (of the Decalogue). From this assertion however we may not conclude that the Decalogue therefore forms the basis of Cyril's ethical teaching. He just mentions the dialogue between

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1) XVIII,30

Jesus and the rich man because the subject of that interview is how to obtain eternal life. Cyril's exhortations are not based on the Ten Commandments, though he once uses the fifth commandment in connexion with an exhortation. This occurs in his seventh lecture where he explains the meaning of the confession that God is our Father. After the admonition to glorify our Father which is in heaven he goes on: "And while we honour our Heavenly Father, let us also honour the fathers of our flesh; since the Lord hath evidently so appointed in the Law and the Prophets, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." To this commandment he adds further texts with a short explanation: Col. 3,20; Mat. 10,37 and Exod. 21,17.<sup>1</sup> The other Commandments of the Decalogue are never quoted in connexion with his exhortations, though there would have been many a possibility to underline his advice with the authority of the Decalogue.

In XII,6 Cyril cites the 7th Commandment, however not as an exhortation, but as part of his indication of how sin reigned in the time of the Old Testament. In XVIII he explains the name "Church" and mentions the Tables (of the Law), because in Dt. 9,10 they are named together with the word "assembly" (ekklesia).

Gal. 3,23-24 is quoted in IV,33 in connexion with Cyril's teaching about the Old and New Testaments. "The God of both Testaments is one, by whom Christ who appeared in the New Testament, was foretold in the Old; who through the Law and the Prophets brought us as a schoolmaster to Christ." But we are not told in which way the Law and the Prophets acted as a schoolmaster. Likewise he does not give any explanation of the following quotation, i.e. Mat. 5,17. So we come to the conclusion that Cyril of Jerusalem does not consider or use the Decalogue as the basis for his ethical teaching, though the Old Testament plays a very important role in his catechetical lectures.

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1) VII,15.

In the 23 catechetical lectures examined there are approximately 370 quotations from the Old Testament, 7 from the Apocrypha and 470 from the New Testament.

c) The catechetical sermons of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

For our investigation we are able to use 16 catechetical sermons delivered by Theodore of Mopsuestia. They are quite obviously addressed to catechumens who are to be prepared for baptism. Theodore says that the time of Easter requires the teaching of the Creed.<sup>1</sup> In the first ten sermons then we find an explanation of the Apostolic Creed, followed by the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in sermon XI. The next three sermons deal with the rites of baptism and their meaning, and finally we find two sermons about the Eucharist.

All these sermons seem to have been delivered before baptism. Several times Theodore begins a sermon with the words: "Yesterday we spoke about..."<sup>2</sup>, so that we may suppose he taught the catechumens daily. The first 11 lectures cover between 12 and 20 pages each, whereas the sermons about the sacraments grow longer and longer (the last one 38 pages!). It is thus an open question whether these last lectures were given in the preserved form or whether they were elaborated later on.

Though Theodore in his first ten lectures gives an explanation of the Creed we find also a few remarks as to the Christian way of life. In his eleventh lecture however he gives a compendium of Christian ethics connected with his interpretation of the Lord's prayer. Let us therefore turn to this interesting sermon first. Theodore quotes Mat. 28,19-20 and explains these verses in the following way: "Our Lord himself, after

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1) I,2

2) II,1; IV,1; XI,1.

saying 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost', added: 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' in order to show that besides the religious and orthodox doctrine we have to take care that our life is in accordance with the divine commandments. For that reason, to the words of the Creed, they (= our Fathers) joined the prayer in which we find a sufficient doctrine of morals, i.e. the prayer which our Lord put into brief words and transmitted to his disciples. For every prayer whatsoever gives the teaching about life to those who apply themselves to their task. For as we want our morals to be, accordingly we endeavour to make our prayers."<sup>1</sup>

The Lord himself who with his life gave an example to us, was very eager in prayer and chose fixed times and places for this purpose. When his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he gave them a perfect lesson: Mat. 6,9-13. "Our Lord chose these brief words as though he wanted to indicate that prayer consists not in words, but in morals, love and eagerness for the good"<sup>2</sup>.

Prayer is connected with choice. If we choose and seek the good, we feel a desire to pray. And if we ask for virtues in our prayer it means that we have chosen these virtues, i.e. a life of love towards God and eagerness for the good.<sup>3</sup>

After this introduction, Theodore gives an explanation of every part of the Lord's prayer showing its meaning for the Christian life. "Our Father which art in heaven." Those who believe in Christ and choose to be His disciples are lifted high above those who live according to the Law of Moses. Those were slaves, subject to the law of commandments.<sup>4</sup> But through Christ the Christians have received the Holy Spirit, they are adopted sons<sup>5</sup>. "Therefore, as there is this difference between you and those who are subject to the Law... it is good if above

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1) XI,1  
3) XI,5  
5) XI,7

2) XI,3  
4) Gal.4,24-25; Eph. 2,15

all you know this: to have morals worthy of this dignity." It is this new state as God's sons which becomes the basis of the Christian life. If they realise their dignity, they will abstain from sin and behave according to their calling.<sup>1</sup>

"Hallowed be thy name". Our actions have to be of such a kind that everybody praises the Lord<sup>2</sup>. "Thy kingdom come". Those who are called to be citizens of the heavenly kingdom and converse with the king are to live according to the rules of this kingdom, to have thoughts worthy of the kingdom and actions in accordance with the life in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." As in heaven nothing is against God's will, so we on earth have to endeavour to stay firmly in God's will. Though we live in this world and have still a mortal and variable nature, nevertheless according to Paul's words<sup>4</sup> we must renew our thoughts and correct them every day in order not to be conformed to this world<sup>5</sup>.

Of course we are not able to attain this moral perfection, although we choose and like it, if God does not help us effectively. This is the reason why our Lord has transmitted to us these things in the form of prayer. "Certainly we shall have them if we want them and ask them from God."<sup>6</sup>

"Give us to-day our necessary bread." Though we look out to the world to come, nevertheless the Lord teaches us to use the things of this world as far as they answer to an urgent need, but with the word "necessary" he rejects the endeavour to seek superfluity.<sup>7</sup>

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors". If we happen to fall due to our weakness, the Lord gives us with this request the remedy of remission, but He teaches us also charity towards those who sin

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1) XI,8

4) Rom. 12,2

7) XI,14

2) XI,10

5) XI,12

3) XI,11

6) XI,13



against us.<sup>1</sup>

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This word shows not only that we live in a world full of temptations which we have to struggle against, but it warns us also not to scandalize our brother.<sup>2</sup>

In his last paragraph, Theodore repeats that in the words of this prayer "our Lord has summed up all moral perfection and has clearly taught what we shall become, what we shall apply ourselves to, what we shall withdraw from and what we shall ask from God. Our Fathers, thinking that in addition to doctrinal correctness and a sincere belief we are to endeavour also to live a life of good morals, have transmitted this prayer to those who approach the gift of baptism; in this way, with the exposition of the Creed they teach us doctrinal correctness, and on the other hand, with the prayer they arrange our life..."<sup>3</sup>

From this sermon it is quite obvious that Christ's words form the basis for Theodore's ethical teaching. This fact is confirmed by the other places where he points to the Christian life.

In his sixth lecture, where he speaks about the meaning of Christ's death, Theodore confronts the new law of Christ with the Law of the Old Testament: "He (Jesus Christ) chose disciples, established the teaching of the new law and the new doctrine, which are different from what is taught by the Law, and he taught that our morals... should be conformable to those."<sup>4</sup> "Necessarily He settled the debt of the Law, approached baptism and showed (the example of) the new morals of the Gospel which are a prefiguration (typos) of the coming world; so that we too... are to live according to his commandments."<sup>5</sup> In our baptism we die and rise with Christ and from now on live a new life. "He tears us out of this world and makes us die in regard to the world and to the Law..."<sup>6</sup>

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1) XI,15-16

4) VI,11

2) XI,17-18

5) VI,12

3) XI,19

6) VI,13

Elsewhere Theodore reminds the candidates that the Jews had the written Law fastened on their hands. It would be disgraceful if we had not the words of the more sublime Creed written in our hearts.<sup>1</sup>

In approximately fifty quotations from the Old Testament no commandment of the Decalogue is cited directly. When Theodore expounds the first article of the Creed he mentions, among other Old Testament quotations, Psalm 81,10. This verse is possibly based on the Decalogue. The fact that not even in this connexion does Theodore quote the first and second commandments directly from the Decalogue is clear evidence that the Ten Commandments were of no importance in his catechetical teaching. His ethics are based exclusively on Christ's words and deeds.

#### d) Ambrose, On the Mysteries.

Ambrose's mystagogical lecture "De Mysteriis", delivered in Milan about A.D. 387, gives a lively description and explanation of the different baptismal rites while allegorizing many Old Testament texts, especially parts of the Song of Solomon.

No moral teaching occurs in this lecture, because "on questions of right conduct we discoursed daily at the time when the lives of the patriarchs or the precepts of the Proverbs were being read, in order that, trained and instructed thereby, you might become accustomed to walk in the paths of our elders and to tread in their steps, and to obey the divine oracles; to the end that you might, after being renewed by baptism, continue to practise the life which befitted the regenerate."<sup>2</sup>

So this lecture gives us only the essential points for the reconstruction of the baptismal liturgy in the 4th century in Milan, but no indication about the method of Ambrose's ethical teaching. However we are told that he took as basis for his exhortations the lives of the patriarchs (= Genesis) and the precepts of the book of Proverbs.

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1) XII,25

2) I,1

e) The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa (385)<sup>1</sup>.

We can deal shortly with this Catechetical Oration, because it does not contribute much to our subject. Gregory has not written his Catechetical Oration for catechumens, but for the "presiding ministers of the mystery of godliness", because they "have need of a system in their instructions, in order that the Church may be replenished by the accession of such as should be saved, through the teaching of the word of Faith being brought home to the hearing of unbelievers."<sup>2</sup>

Like Origen, Gregory endeavours to explain Christian truth with the means of philosophical conceptions of Greek thought. His interest lies almost exclusively in the dogmatic aspect of the Christian teaching.

The following subjects are treated:

The doctrine of the Trinity	chapter 1 - 4
The creation of man and the origin of evil	" 5 - 8
Incarnation and Atonement	" 9 - 32
Baptism and Eucharist	" 33 - 40

Only in the last chapter<sup>3</sup> does he speak about Christian life. After describing the change brought about by baptism, he proceeds: "That change in our life which takes place through regeneration will not be change, if we continue in the state in which we were." If after baptism there prevail still the same anger, passion of greed, unbridled and unseemly thought, pride, envy, arrogance, as was evident before baptism, then quite obviously no change has taken place. "If, when the bath has been applied to the body, the soul has not cleansed itself from the stains of its passions and affections, but the life after initiation keeps on a level with the uninitiate life, then, though it may be a bold thing to say, yet I will say it and will not shrink: in these cases the water is but water, for the gift of the Holy Ghost in no ways appears in him who is thus baptismally born."

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1) Quotations from "A select library of Nicene and Postnicene Fathers",  
2nd Series, Vol. V. Oxford/New York 1893.

2) Prologue

3) ch. 40

What then are the signs of the sons of God? "The child born of any one is entirely of a kindred nature with his parent. If, then, you have received God, if you have become a child of God, make manifest in your disposition the God that is in you, manifest in yourself Him that begot you. By the same marks whereby we recognize God, must this relationship to God of the son so born be exhibited." As examples Gregory quotes different texts from the Old Testament which show God's goodness, His readiness to forgive, His 'repenting from evil' and His righteousness.

Gregory closes this chapter with a short reminder of the things which are "set before us as to be expected in the life that follows this, being the natural outgrowth according to the righteous judgment of God, in the life of each, of his particular disposition."

Gregory of Nyssa does not mention the Decalogue or any other commandment. From the new stage as Christians have to come forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit; his life has to be God-like as a witness of his acceptance as a son of God.

#### f) Gregory of Nazianzus.

There have to be said a few words about Gregory of Nazianzus. We find only scarce references to the Decalogue in his writings, but three of them are of special interest.

In his oration on Holy Baptism (381) he calls out to the catechumens, "Give me the tables of your heart; I will be your Moses, though this be a bold thing to say: I will write on them a shorter method of salvation"<sup>1</sup>. Then he gives a short interpretation of the Creed which makes evident what he means by the "new Decalogue". He concludes this exposition with the words, "Then, in the tenth place, work that which is good upon this foundation of dogma; for faith without works is dead, even as are works apart from faith."

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1) XLIV

In an oration of the year 385<sup>1</sup> he compares the old and the new Laws and tells the catechumens that "a life according to the will of God is bitter and arduous, especially to beginners." Though it is said that the new yoke is easy and the burden light, this proves right only on account of the hope and reward. But if apart from that the precepts of the Old Testament are compared with those of the New Testament, the Gospel is more full of toil and trouble than the enactments of the Law. As examples Gregory mentions several precepts from the Decalogue and from Is. 5,8, comparing them with sayings of Jesus.

From these two passages as well as from his practice of catechetical teaching noticeable in other orations it is evident that Gregory made no use of the Decalogue but based his ethical teaching on the exhortations in the Gospels and Epistles.

At the end of his life, during his retirement at Arianzum, he composed a great number of poems of which about 400 are extant. Among these poems there is a short one on the Decalogue. From this fact has sometimes been inferred that Gregory used the Decalogue in his catechetical teaching and therefore had put it in poetical form so that it could be learned by heart more easily by the catechumens.<sup>2</sup> This inference, however, is not justified. In one of his poems entitled "In suos versus" Gregory explains why he turned to poetry in his old age. "He wished first of all to prove that the new Christian culture was no longer inferior in any way to the pagan. Secondly, since certain heresies, especially that of Apollinaris, did not hesitate to spread their teachings in poetical garb, he finds it necessary to make use of the same weapon for a successful refutation of their false doctrine."<sup>3</sup>

This poem on the Decalogue is thus no evidence that he used this code for his catechetical teaching. Nevertheless we notice that at least at the time he composed these poems he did not think that the "new

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1) Second oration on Easter, XVI

2) so Rentschka, Die Dekalogkatechese des hl. Augustin.

3) Quasten, Patrology III p. 244.

Decalogue" (= the Creed) ought to replace the old one in an exclusive sense. Whether he had changed his mind since 381 or whether in his old age he did not dare any longer to say "the bold thing" we do not know. But in his poem on the Decalogue he asks God that the Ten Commandments might be written in his heart.<sup>1</sup>

## § 12. Ancient Church-Orders, Apostolic Fathers and Apologists.

### 1. Ancient Church-Orders.

#### a) Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition and derived documents.

The "Apostolic Tradition" of Hippolytus<sup>2</sup>, composed about 220 in Rome, does not tell us much about the preparation of the catechumens for baptism. We read about the conditions on which a newcomer can be accepted as a catechumen and about the forbidden crafts and professions for Christians. If he after scrutiny is accepted, he has to be instructed for three years. But the Apostolic Tradition does not insist on that period. "If a man be earnest and persevere well in the matter, let him be received, because it is not the time that is judged, but the conduct."<sup>3</sup>

In XVIII,1 we read about the teacher who gives instruction. But from the following precepts it is obvious that the teaching referred to is addressed to the whole congregation: after the teacher finishes the instruction, the catechumens are to pray by themselves, apart from the faithful<sup>4</sup>. The women have to stand in the assembly (ekklesia) by themselves (= apart from the men), both the baptised women and the women catechumens.<sup>5</sup> After prayer is finished, the catechumens shall not give

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1) Compare also Poemata moralia, carm. 24.

2) Though Hippolytus was a rather controversial figure in Rome and his "Apostolic Tradition" is of a polemic character, we have no reason to assume that the parts concerning the instruction of catechumens are inventions of the author. Hippolytus obviously bases on definite traditions, perhaps to a great extent from Eastern sources. (RGG<sup>3</sup> III p.362). see also B.S. Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, Cambridge 1934 p.25f; G. Dix, The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition, p. XXXIX f.

3) XVII,2 (quotations following the translation by G. Dix)

4) XVIII,1

5) XVIII,2



the kiss of peace, whereas the baptised shall embrace each other.<sup>1</sup> After the prayer the teacher lays hands upon the catechumens and dismisses them. There is then no evidence of any special teaching being given to catechumens, either in this service (missa catechumenorum) or apart from it.

Before Easter, those who are chosen and set apart to receive baptism are scrutinized about their life as catechumens "whether they have fulfilled every good work"<sup>2</sup>. If the result of this scrutiny is satisfactory, "let them hear the Gospel"<sup>3</sup>. From the day they are chosen they have to be exorcised daily. It is not stated how long this special preparation lasts, but from XX,5 one gets the impression that it confined itself to the week before Easter.

There is an interesting passage in the third part of the Apostolic Tradition (about Church Observances). In Chapter XXXV the Christians are advised to "wash their hands and pray to God when they rise from sleep at dawn before they undertake any work". It is the next paragraph which calls for our special attention: "But if there should be an instruction (κατήχησις) in the word let each one prefer to go thither, considering that it is God whom he hears speaking by the mouth of him who instructs."<sup>4</sup> In the following sentences<sup>5</sup> the faithful member is exhorted not to miss this opportunity. It would be a great loss if he did not go to the place of instruction because he will hear things he thinks not (to hear), his faith will be established, he will be told what to do in his own house and be able to avoid all the evils of that day. "And if there is a day on which there is no instruction let each one at home take a holy book and read in it sufficiently what seems profitable."<sup>6</sup>

This passage is instructive because it shows us that in the only instance we hear about teaching apart from the usual Sunday service it is related to "every faithful man and woman" of the congregation,

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1) XVIII,3-4

3) XX,2

5) XXXV,2-3

2) XX,1

4) XXXV,2

6) XXXVI,1

whereas the catechumens are not even mentioned, though we may surmise that they were expected to attend these instructions.

The so-called Egyptian Church Order<sup>1</sup> is a slightly revised version of Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition. We do not receive any new light from these documents for our investigation. The Arabic as well as the Sahidic text order that the servants shall work five days, but on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day they are to devote themselves to the Church in order that they may learn the service of God and be instructed in piety.<sup>2</sup>

The Ethiopic text has in addition a long theological amplification concerning the resting on both the sabbaths. Because God rested on the 7th day, it "is a memorial of his glory and a memorial of his work, and he made it a rest". But the First Day, the day of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, was also named sabbath. When God through the prophets commanded: "Honour my sabbaths and continue in my law and in my statutes", he meant both days, i.e. Sabbath and First Day.<sup>3</sup>

Apostolic Constitutions Book VIII. Part of this book is also based on the Apostolic Tradition. In the points which concern our subject there is no difference from the original Church Order. As to the observance of Sabbath and Lord's Day, the Apostolic Constitution agrees with the Egyptian Church Order.

The Testament of our Lord. This document is the last of the Church Orders proper and was probably composed in the 5th century in Syria. Its author merged the Apostolic Tradition with two other sources. In the ordinances concerning the preparation and instruction of the catechumens there is basically no difference from the Apostolic Tradition, but we find an addition as to the method of instruction: "And let the bishop provide for him in the Lord with prophetic instructions which lead

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1) extant in Arabic, Ethiopic and Sahidic language, see G. Horner, The Statutes of the Apostles or Canones Ecclesiastici, London 1904

2) Arabic text Stat. 65, Sahidic Stat. 75

3) Stat. 66

him to purity; and if he maketh progress, also with apostolic doctrines, and then with Gospel (doctrines) and with the perfect word of doctrine; and if he be worthy, let him be baptized."<sup>1</sup>

In II/3 it is said that the catechumens are to hear the perfectness of the Gospel "for three years". But if anybody desires to be baptized sooner there is no objection, provided that his behaviour is satisfactory.

Lent is the time of special instruction, but not only for the candidates of baptism, but for the whole congregation. "In the 40 days of Pascha, let the people abide in the temple, keeping vigil and praying, hearing the Scriptures and hymns of praise and the books of doctrine."<sup>2</sup>

The Canons of Hippolytus, based on the Apostolic Tradition, are written probably in Syria or Egypt about 500. Quasten<sup>3</sup> calls this document "a comparatively late and unskilful redaction of Hippolytus' Church Order".

The Epitome. "The Epitome of the Eighth Book of the Apostolic Constitutions", sometimes called "The Constitutions through Hippolytus" is not really what these titles suggest it to be. On the whole it is a copy of those parts of the Apostolic Constitutions, Book VIII, which deal with organisation and discipline. Its five parts contain the following material:

Part A Apostolic Constitutions, Book VIII, chapters 1-2

C	"	"	"	chapter 32
D	"	"	"	chapters 33-34, 42-45
E	"	"	"	chapter 46
B	"	"	"	chapters 3,16,18-28,30-31

with one Ordination prayer directly from the Apostolic Tradition and another one as a compromise between Apostolic Constitutions and Apostolic Tradition.

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1) II,1

2) II,8

3) Patrology II, p. 186

The Epitome is thus not a source used in the Constitutions, but it "is extracted from the Constitutions with a few reversions to Hippolytus."<sup>1</sup>

b) The Syriac 'Didascalia Apostolorum'.

The Didascalia (or "Catholic Teaching of the Twelve Apostles and Holy Disciples of Our Saviour") might be called a Church Order in the guise of pastoral theology. It was probably composed in Syria in the third century. Its peculiar teaching about the Old Testament Law (First and Second Legislation) will be considered later<sup>2</sup>. The fact that the writer elevates the Ten Words (= the Decalogue) and the Judgments (probably the Book of Covenant) high above the other Commandments in the Old Testament and even considers the Decalogue to be in a strong antithesis to the ceremonial Law does not mean that his ethics are particularly based on the Old Testament moral Law. His attitude is to be understood as a reaction against the danger of Judaistic misunderstanding which threatened his fellow Christians. It is in the first place Christ and the Gospels which are authoritative for Christian life, and the Old Testament Commandments are considered only as far as they agree with the New Testament norm.

"For men who obey God there is one law, simple and true and mild, without question for Christians, this, that what thou hatest that it should be done to thee by another, thou do not to another."<sup>3</sup> In the letter Yot (iota) the writer sees a mystical link between Jesus and the Decalogue, as the first letter of the name Jesus in Hebrew is used to denote the number ten. Nevertheless he explains the 4th commandment typically as signifying the final rest (the seventh millenium), hence this precept is not to be taken literally by the Christians.<sup>4</sup>

His approach in ethics appears clearly in the following quotation: "If thou follow Christ, thou shalt inherit the blessings. When thou

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1) See B.S.Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, p.14

2) see § 12.2 e.

3) Ch. 1

4) Ch. 25

conformest to Him, through the Gospel thou conformest to the Law..."<sup>1</sup>  
 The main task of the Bishop with regard to ethical instruction is to  
 "compare the Law and the Prophets with the Gospel, so that the sayings  
 of the Law and the Prophets may be in accord with the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

### c) The Statutes of the Apostles (Ecclesiastical Canons).<sup>3</sup>

This is a short document compiled in Egypt in the 4th century. The first part consists of the Didache chapters 1,1-3 and 2,2 - 4,8 with some insertions. The second part gives regulations about bishops, presbyters, deacons and widows. In the introduction it is said that Jesus having gathered his Apostles told them what they had to teach in all the world. Accordingly the different paragraphs open each with the phrase: Said Johannes, Said Petros, Said Andreas etc. There is nothing in this treatise which bears upon our subject, as we have already dealt with the Didache in a previous section.

### d) The Apostolic Constitutions.

The Apostolic Constitutions are a collection of liturgical-canonical writings, compiled in Syria about 380. The Books 1-6 are based on the Didascalia, but with many additions, omissions and alterations. Book 7 brings in its first part the Didache, in its second part prayers and precepts for the instruction of catechumens and their initiation into baptism. Book VIII consists of the following parts: a) On the diversity of spiritual gifts, generally held to be based on a lost writing by Hippolytus ("Concerning Gifts"), b) a Church Order, actually Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition, very much expanded, and a set of prayers, called Clementine Liturgy, c) the so-called "Ecclesiastical or Apostolical Canons", d) the Epitome.

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1) Ch. 25

2) Ch. 4

3) see Ad. Harnack, Die Quellen der sog. Apostolischen Kirchenordnung, Leipzig 1886.

We shall consider this compilation only so far as it diverges from the basic documents already discussed in our previous paragraphs.

Book VII. Through many insertions and interpretations the Didache is extended to the double size of its original form. Here too we find the commandment to keep the Sabbath as well as the Lord's day, which does not occur in the Didache<sup>1</sup>. The source of the second part, about instruction of catechumens and baptism, is unknown. We are told about the subject which is dealt with in the catechetical teaching: "Let him, therefore, who is to be taught the truth in regard to piety be instructed before his baptism in the knowledge of the unbegotten God, in the understanding of His only begotten Son, in the assured acknowledgment of the Holy Ghost. Let him learn the order of the several parts of the creation, the series of providence, the different dispensations of Thy laws. Let him be instructed why the world was made, and why man was appointed to be a citizen therein; let him also know his own nature, of what sort it is; let him be taught how God punished the wicked with water and fire, and did glorify the saints in every generation... Let him that offers himself to baptism learn these and the like things during the time that he is a catechumen; and let him who lays his hands upon him adore God... and thank Him... And after this thanksgiving, let him instruct him in the doctrines concerning our Lord's incarnation, and in those concerning His passion, and resurrection from the dead, and ascension. And when it remains that the catechumen is to be baptized, let him learn what concerns the renunciation of the devil, and the joining himself with Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Book VIII. In the Ecclesiastical Canons (which include the Apostolic Constitutions in the Canon of Holy Scripture!) we are told to "take care that your young persons learn the Wisdom of the very learned Sirach"<sup>3</sup>, which confirms that this book was considered as particularly valuable for the ethical teaching.

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1) VII, 23  
3) Can. 85

2) VII, 39 and 40



## 2. Some significant thoughts of Apologists concerning the Old Testament Law.

### a) Introduction.

Various developments in the second century forced the Christians to re-think the meaning of the Old Testament for the Church and to give a pertinent answer to the challenging heresies. These answers differ according to the writers and also with regard to the front they were facing. One of these fronts of course was not new: the Judaistic influence upon the Church had been a subject of fierce controversy in Paul's life and work. But the other front, Marcionism and Gnosticism, compelled the Church to view the question from a different angle and formulate her belief in a new way.

Though Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 A.D. the Jews in Palestine did not lose hope in their final victory. They still expected the Messiah in the near future, and Hadrian shortly after the beginning of his reign seems to have given new buoyancy to the nationalist movement. It is not clear whether Hadrian allowed the Jews to rebuild their own temple and thus strengthened the expectation of the impending appearance of the Messiah or whether he gave order to erect a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus on the site of the ruined Jewish Temple and thus caused the outbreak of the revolt<sup>1</sup>. At any rate this revolt broke out in 132 A.D., and the Jewish leader Simon Bar Kozibah was acclaimed by many as the expected Messiah. Even Rabbi Akiba had great expectations of him and called him the "Star out of Jacob" (Bar Cocheba, Num. 24,17).

The Jewish Christians who hitherto had formed a conventicle within the synagogue, now felt compelled to make a decision. Either they stuck to their conviction that the Messiah had already come, or they had to give up their belief in Jesus and throw in their lot with the Jews under the leadership of the "Messiah" Bar Cocheba. It seems that Jewish

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1) cf. L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 161

proselytism at that time became very strong and that the Jews not only tried to convert the Christians by persuasion, but even used force to make them partakers of the messianic kingdom which they thought was at hand. Their loyalty to Jesus, however, effected a definite breach with the Jews and aroused Bar Cocheba's hate which resulted in oppression and persecution. They had to separate themselves from their people and consequently retired to Pella.<sup>1</sup>

It is against this background that we have to see the Epistle of Barnabas. Controversy with the Jews is also the subject of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, though obviously it looks back upon the catastrophe which in 135 A.D. had put an end to the Jewish national ambitions. Later on it was the Didascalia which warned against taking over the Jewish ceremonial Law by the Christians.

On the other hand, Gnosticism and the Church of Marcion were extending very quickly. There existed of course different theories of Gnosticism, and Marcion cannot be called a Gnostic, but in one respect there was a fairly general agreement: the Old Testament is not the revelation of the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ, but it originates from a lower God, the Demiurge, and his creation, i.e. this world, is rather a poor achievement in keeping with his deficient abilities. The same deficiency shows in his dealing with the Jewish people and the laws of the Old Testament. The true God, made known by Jesus Christ, has nothing in common with the Demiurge and therefore the Old Testament is completely repudiated. This is the front faced by Irenaeus.

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1) Isidore Epstein, Judaism, 1959 (Pelican-Books) fails to see the real issue when he states: "In order to escape Hadrian's common proscription of the Torah and to gain some temporary advantage, the Jewish Christians did not hesitate to renounce all the religious practices they had observed for about a century and, cutting themselves adrift from their own people, finally joined the mass of pagans who under the influence of Paul had during the intervening period been attracted to Christianity". p.119. As a matter of fact it was the loyalty to Jesus and not some temporary advantage which was at stake!

b) The Epistle of Barnabas.

Barnabas reminds the Christians that God has abolished the Old Testament sacrifices and replaced them by the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the prophets God has already taught that he has no need of offerings and fasts, but seeks humbleness, obedience and mercy.<sup>1</sup> This has been shown beforehand "so that we should not be dashed as proselytes unto their (= the Jewish) law." The Jews actually lost their covenant at the same time as it was given to them. While the Lord wrote the tables of stone on Mount Sinai they turned to the idols and lost the covenant. "And Moses perceived, and cast the two tables out of his hands; and their covenant was broken, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart in hope of his faith."<sup>2</sup>

Christ is not only foretold by the prophets, but also foreshadowed by the two goats which played a significant part on the Day of Atonement as well as by the offer of a heifer. The real circumcision is the circumcision of the ears and the heart. If circumcision of the flesh were the sign of God's people, then every Syrian and Arab and all the priests of the idols would also belong to the covenant. As to the food precepts, Moses spoke in spirit, e.g. the prohibition to eat pork meant, "thou shalt not join thyself to such men as are like swine."<sup>3</sup>

In various manners the cross of Christ is revealed in the Old Testament. In Joseph's blessing of his two children is already announced that the younger one (= the Christians) should be the first and heir of the covenant. The covenant which God promised was really given, but the Jews "were not worthy to receive it because of their sins." When Moses came down from Mount Sinai and saw the golden calf, "he threw the tables out of his hands, and the tables of the Lord's

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1) Is. 1,11-13; Jer. 7,22 f; Ps. 51,17; Is. 58,6-10.

2) Ch. I - IV

3) Ch. V - X

covenant were broken to pieces. Moses indeed had received it, but they were not worthy." So the Lord himself gave the covenant to us through the Lord Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The Fourth Commandment has not to be taken literally. If it is said that God finished the creation in six days, "this means that in six thousand years the Lord will finish all things". "Then his Son shall come for the judgment and God will truly rest on the seventh day." According to Is. 1,13, the present sabbaths of the Jews are not acceptable to the Lord. As the eighth day will be the beginning of another world and as Christ rose from the dead on the eighth day too, therefore the Christians keep this day in joyfulness. Finally Barnabas shows how wrong the Jews are in putting their hope on the Temple building. The real temple chosen by God is the human heart which through forgiveness is made new, the dwelling place of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

#### c) Justin Martyr.

Justin's dialogue with the Jew Trypho gives us another account of how a Christian of the second century defended Christianity against the Jews and at the same time invited them to accept Jesus Christ as Messiah. As this dialogue is very extensive (142 chapters), we shall confine ourselves strictly to the parts which deal especially with the Old Testament Law.

Trypho is wondering what can be the hope of the Christians who suppose themselves better than others, but despise the Old Covenant by rejecting the consequent duties, not observing either sabbaths nor the rite of circumcision.<sup>3</sup> Justin answers that the Christians do not have another God than the Jews, but their trust is not through Moses or through the law. For in Christ a new covenant is instituted, as God had already annunced through the prophets, and this new covenant implies a new law. "For the law promulgated on Horeb is now old, and belongs to yourselves alone, but this is for all universally. Now,

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1) XI - XIV

2) XV - XVI

3) Dial. Tryph. X.

law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it, and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one." Christ himself is the new Covenant, he is the final and eternal law.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews in their sinfulness and blindness however cling to the old ceremonial law as if it could take away their sins. As the Prophet said, their ears are closed, their eyes blinded, and the heart hardened. "The Lawgiver is present, yet you do not see him."<sup>2</sup> Not the Jewish washings, but only the Baptism of Christ accompanied by conversion of the heart is able to purify from sins.<sup>3</sup>

Circumcision is not even acknowledged as a positive sign of the covenant by Justin. It is a sign which separates the Jews from all the other nations in order that "you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer". Because God knew beforehand that they would slay the Just One he gave them this sign, as it were to single them out from all the peoples for the future judgment.<sup>4</sup>

The fleshly circumcision, the Sabbaths, and all the feasts were ordered only on account of their transgressions and the hardness of their hearts. If there were another reason for these ordinances, we Christians would observe them too.<sup>5</sup> "To you alone this circumcision was necessary, in order that the people may be no people, and the nation no nation: Hos. 2,25."<sup>6</sup>

Sabbath was not in use before Moses. Only after the Israelites had made the calf in the wilderness God accommodated himself to that nation, allowed them to offer sacrifices in order to keep them away from idols and commanded to keep Sabbaths that they might retain the memorial of God: Ez. 20,12<sup>7</sup>. In order that they should not eat and drink any more without keeping God before their eyes<sup>8</sup> he commanded them to abstain from certain kinds of food, which had not been

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1) Justin, Dial. XI

3) XIII-XIV

5) XVIII

7) XIX

2) XII

4) XVI

6) XIX

8) Ex. 32,6

asked in former times.<sup>1</sup> So all these things were imposed on them on account of their unrighteousness. Justin then quotes Ez. 20,19-26 being of the opinion that his representation is in agreement with that of the prophet.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless the rites of the Old Testament have a typical meaning. The lamb sacrificed as the passover was a type of Christ.<sup>3</sup> The offering of fine flour pointed to the Eucharist. The circumcision on the eighth day was a type of the true circumcision, i.e. from deceit and iniquity by Christ's resurrection on the first day after the Sabbath, which is also the eighth.<sup>4</sup> The twelve bells on the robe of the High Priest were a symbol of the 12 Apostles. "By enumerating all the other appointments of Moses I can demonstrate that they were types, and symbols, and declarations of those things which would happen to Christ... and of those things which would also be done by Christ Himself."<sup>5</sup>

In another context Justin explains that every people has a certain knowledge of moral righteousness. "For God sets before every race of mankind that which is always and universally just, as well as all righteousness; and every race knows that adultery, and fornication, and homicide, and such like, are sinful." Though they all commit such practices, nevertheless they have the knowledge that they act wrongly. Jesus Christ summed up all righteousness and piety in two commandments: Mt. 22,37.<sup>6</sup>

#### d) Irenaeus.

As already mentioned Irenaeus had to fight against another front. He had to prove that He who spoke in the Old Testament is the same God as He who was revealed by Jesus Christ. But he could not just allegorise the Old Testament in order to save it from the Gnostic and Marcionite attacks. Marcion's realistic (though biased) theological

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1) Justin, Dial. XX

3) ib. XL

5) ib. XLII

2) ib. XXI

4) ib. XLI

6) ib. XCIII



thinking had to be met by a similar realistic thinking from the side of orthodoxy. In the following we shall summarize Irenaeus' view based on *Adversus Haereses* Book IV, chapters 12-17.<sup>1</sup>

What Jesus opposes is not the Mosaic law, but the traditions of the elders (the pharisaical law) which were contrary to the Law. Jesus did not bring from heaven a new commandment greater than the two commandments of love given already in the Old Testament. Likewise Paul says that "love is the fulfilling of the Law" because love makes man perfect. So the fundamental laws are the same in the Old and New Testaments. "For the precepts of an absolutely perfect life, since they are the same in each Testament, have pointed out (to us) the same God, who certainly has promulgated particular laws adapted for each; but the more prominent and the greatest (commandments), without which salvation cannot (be attained), He has exhorted (us to observe) the same in both."<sup>2</sup>

Christ as the end of the Law is also the final cause of it. He saw the affliction of Israel in Egypt and said "I have surely come down to deliver them."<sup>3</sup> When Jesus was asked by somebody what he should do in order to inherit eternal life, Jesus pointed to the Old Testament commandments<sup>4</sup>, "setting as an ascending series before those who wished to follow Him, the precepts of the law, as the entrance into life, and what He then said to one He said to all."<sup>5</sup> The fact that the man did not sell all his goods as he was told by Jesus shows that he was not free from covetousness.

"And that the Lord did not abrogate the natural (precepts) of the law, by which man is justified, which also those who were justified by faith, and who pleased God, did observe previous to the giving of the

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1) Quotations following the rendering of Ante-Nicene Christian Library, Vol. V.

2) Iren. Adv. Haer. XII,3

3) Ex. 3,8

4) Mt. 19,17 ff

5) Adv. haer. XII,5



secondary; that is, to things that are real, by means of those that are typical; and by things temporal, to eternal; and by carnal to the spiritual; and by the earthly to the heavenly."<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning God had implanted natural precepts in mankind. These natural precepts (and nothing more, Dt. V.22) were given to Israel in the Decalogue. But when they made a calf and turned their minds back to Egypt "desiring to be slaves instead of freemen, they were placed for the future in a state of servitude suited to their wish - (a slavery) which did not indeed cut them off from God, but subjected them to the yoke of bondage." These secondary commandments are called by Ezekiel "statutes that were no good, and judgments in which they shall not live"<sup>2</sup> and the same interpretation was given by Stephen.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, because of their unwillingness to be obedient, Moses gave them certain precepts which were not in accordance with God's original intention, but adapted to their hard nature, e.g. divorce.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless these secondary commandments formed part of God's purpose in bringing his people to the predetermined aim: "God permitted indulgences for the benefit of His people, drawing them on by means of the ordinances already mentioned, so that they might obtain the gift of salvation through them, while they obeyed the Decalogue, and being restrained by Him, should not revert to idolatry, nor apostatize from God, but learn to love Him with the whole heart."<sup>5</sup>

The people of Israel were given two signs of Covenant, i.e. circumcision and Sabbath. These signs however were not meant as a means of justification. Abraham, Lot, Enoch, Noah were justified without circumcision or Sabbath observance. Nevertheless as signs they have a symbolical meaning. "The circumcision after the flesh typified

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1) Adv. haer. XIV,3

3) Acts 7,38 ff. Adv.haer. XV,1

4) Mt. 19,7-8

2) Ez. 20,25

5) Adv.haer. XV,2

that after the spirit, and the Sabbaths taught that we should continue day by day in God's service."<sup>1</sup>

Then Irenaeus gives a peculiar interpretation of Deut. 5,3: The Lord did not form the covenant with your fathers, but for you. "The righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls, that is, they loved the God who made them, and did not injury to their neighbour." Therefore they did not need prohibitory mandates. But "when this righteousness and love to God had passed into oblivion, and became extinct in Egypt", God led the people with power out of Egypt and gave them the Decalogue, showing them the way of life. These commandments "remain permanently with us" and were not abrogated, but extended and increased by Christ.<sup>2</sup>

"The laws of bondage, however, were one by one promulgated to the people by Moses, suited for their instruction or for their punishment." These later commandments are cancelled by the new covenant of liberty. "But He (= Christ) increased and widened those laws which are natural, and noble, and common to all." As we are not slaves, but children, we shall give account to God not of deeds only, but even of words and thoughts, as is taught in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>3</sup>

From the Psalms and prophets Irenaeus proves that God did not need the offerings and oblations of Israel but he sought faith, obedience and righteousness. It was a great misunderstanding that the Israelites stressed the precepts of secondary importance while neglecting those of primary importance.<sup>4</sup>

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1) Adv.haer. XVI, 1-2  
3) ib. XVI,5

2) ib. XVI, 3-4  
4) ib. XVII.

e) The Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum.<sup>1</sup>

In the Didascalia we find basically the same thoughts concerning the Old Testament Law as in Irenaeus, but they are developed in a rather radical way.

First God gave Israel "a simple and pure and holy law, (a law) of life, wherein our Saviour set His name." This Law consists of the Ten Words and the Judgments (= Decalogue and probably Book of Covenant). In this Law there is "no burden, no distinction of meats, nor incensings, nor offerings of sacrifices and burnt offerings."

In order to prove that God did not ask any offerings, the Didascalia gives rather a strange interpretation of Ex. 20,24-25: God does not command any offerings, but He gives advice how to make an altar in case the Israelites should feel inclined to offer a sacrifice.

(The prohibition of using a tool is interpreted as prohibition of circumcision). From early times already the practice of offerings had been a very doubtful matter. It resulted in Cain's killing his brother, and Noah too was blamed for it.

But things took a turn for the worse after the Israelites made the golden calf. Because they denied God, he became angry and "bound them with the Second Legislation, and laid heavy burdens upon them and a hard yoke upon their neck." This Second Legislation consisted in distinction of meats, purifications, offerings, sacrifices, firstlings, vows etc. Now God says no longer "if thou shalt make...", but "Make an altar and sacrifice continually!" "For because of manifold sins there were laid upon them customs unspeakable."

All these commandments of the Second Legislation are an expression of God's "hot anger": "For the Lord judged them with a just judg-

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1) see also p. 202 f.

When not stated otherwise the quotations are taken from Chapter XXV, following the translation by Connolly.

ment, and dealt thus with them because of their wickedness, and hardened their heart like Pharaoh."

According to the writer of the Didascalia these two different Legislations are already clearly discerned by Ezekiel. The First Legislation is mentioned in ch. 20,11: "I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live." But the second law is the law of death: "Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life."<sup>1</sup>

Through the Prophets however God made known that the Second Legislation in a future time would be abolished<sup>2</sup>. This abolition was brought about by Jesus Christ: "He fully and completely abolished the Second Legislation. For he did not use sprinklings, or baptisms, or other wanted rites; nor did he offer sacrifices or burnt offerings, or any thing that is written in the Second Legislation to offer."

If Jesus said that "one letter Yod shall not pass away from the Law", then this word concerns only the Ten Commandments: "Now it is the Yod which passes not away from the Law, even that which may be known from the Law itself through the Ten Words which is in the name of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Therefore "in the Gospel He renews and confirms and fulfils the Ten Words of the Law"<sup>4</sup>. "The Law is indissoluble; but the Second Legislation is temporary, and is dissoluble."

Jesus came to set us loose from those bonds of the Second Legislation, calling us: Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.<sup>5</sup> The Second Legislation was imposed because of idolatry, but the Christians through baptism have been set free from idolatry and that means that they have also "been released from the Bonds and relieved of the Second Legislation, and set free from bitter slavery, and the curse has been taken off and put away from you."

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1) Ez. 20,25

2) Jer. 6,20; 7,21 f; Is. 1,11-14

3) Yod, the first letter in the name of Jesus, denotes the number ten in Hebrew.

4) ch. 1

5) Mt. 11,28



The writer of the Didascalia warns against Sabbath-observance. To say that the Sabbath is prior to the first Day of the week means to be still tied with the bonds. Two arguments are used to prove that God does not want us to observe the Sabbath: a) "If God willed that we should be idle on one day of six, first of all the patriarchs and righteous men, and all they that were before Moses, would have remained idle (upon it)". b) God himself is not idle on the Sabbath day, but causes the winds to blow and the waters to flow. "For if He would say: Thou shalt be idle... how does He (continue to) work?" The Sabbath is type of the final rest, signifying the seventh thousand (years).

Christ did not abolish these things merely in His own person, "but He wrought also by the Romans; and He overthrew the temple, and caused the altar to cease, and made an end of sacrifices, and all the commands that are in the Second Legislation He abolished." Through the Romans He not only makes clear that the Second Legislation is abolished, but also that the Law is made firm. "For the Romans also hold the Law... therefore is their dominion so strong." So it is impossible for anybody to be without Law, even if he wanted to. Against his will he comes under the Law. "For He said in the Law: Thou shalt not kill; but if a man kills, he is condemned by the Law of the Romans."

If the Christians read the Old Testament, they have to take care not to apply the Second Legislation to themselves: "Yet when thou readest the Law, beware of the Second Legislation, that thou do but read it merely; but the commands and warnings that are therein much avoid, lest thou lead thyself astray and bind thyself with the bonds which may not be loosed of heavy burdens. For this cause therefore, if thou read the Second Legislation, consider this alone: that thou know and glorify God who delivered us from all these bonds, and have this set before thine eyes, that thou discern and know what (in

the Law) is the Law, and what are the bonds that are in the second Legislation."<sup>1</sup>

It is especially the task of the bishop to distinguish between the Law and the Second Legislation, that he may show "what is the law of the faithful, and what are the bonds of them that believe not; lest any one of those under thy authority take the bonds for the Law, and lay upon himself heavy burdens, and become a son of perdition."<sup>2</sup>

In the Books I - VI of the Apostolic Constitutions we notice in principle the same differentiation between first and second Legislation as in the Didascalia. There are however two slight alterations. The first Legislation here seems to include only the Decalogue (called the Law of nature)<sup>3</sup> and not the Book of Covenant. "The Law is the Decalogue"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover the Fourth Commandment is not explained allegorically but is to be observed by the Christians. "Thou shalt observe the Sabbath... it is a rest for meditation of the Law, not for idleness of the hands."<sup>5</sup> "Every Sabbath day excepting one, and every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice."<sup>6</sup>

But there is a certain inconsistency, because the argument of the Didascalia for the allegorical interpretation "every day is the Lord's" is not omitted.<sup>7</sup> The same inconsistency occurs with regard to the Book of Covenant. Though it is obviously not considered as belonging to the First Legislation, nevertheless the explanation of Ex. 20,24 is taken over from the Didascalia.<sup>8</sup>

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1) ch. II

3) Apost. Const. I,6; VI,19.23

5) ib. II,36

7) cf. VI,23

2) ch. IV

4) ib. VI,20

6) ib. VI,20

8) ib. VI,20

f) Summary and comparison.

Of the four writers examined in the previous sections, Barnabas is the most radical in his dealing with the Old Testament and the Jews. His attitude has to be considered against the background depicted on page 205 f. The Jews according to him have no covenant and no promise. As a matter of fact they lost the covenant at the moment it was being given to them. The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have no meaning in their literal sense, but when understood allegorically they point to Christ and apply to his followers. From this point of view he cannot speak of two covenants or distinguish different kinds of commandments, i.e. ordinances which are confined to the Old Covenant and precepts which are taken over into the New one.

Justin Martyr, though facing the same front, is less radical. If Barnabas was warning his fellow Christians against the Jews and their fanatic proselytism, Justin is in discussion with them after their political defeat. In his discussion Justin does not mention the Decalogue. The Fourth Commandment is seen as part of the ceremonial law which is abrogated by the New Covenant. He knows only one law binding for the Christians, i.e. Christ himself, the final and eternal law. Like Barnabas, Justin sees the golden calf as the turning point in Israel's history. Because of their apostasy the ceremonial law was imposed on them. Three different meanings of the ceremonial law can be discerned in Justin's argument:

- a) It was a judgment (punishment) on account of their transgressions and the hardness of their hearts. This thought is worked out especially in view of the circumcision.
- b) It was a positive means to remind them of God and keep them away from idols (exemplified by Sabbath, sacrifices, food precepts). Nevertheless these commandments were not good in themselves and could not give life (Ez. 20,25).

- c) All the Mosaic appointments were types and symbols pointing to Christ.

According to Justin the basic sin of the Jews consists in the fact that they expect salvation from these misunderstood ceremonial performances and do not recognize the Lawgiver, Christ, who is present and at the same time fulfills and abrogates the Old Law.

Irenaeus had to deal not with those who wanted to impose the whole Old Testament on the Christians but with those who tried to put away wholly the Old Testament. Therefore he endeavours to point out in which way the Old Testament is relevant to the Church. To do so he has to distinguish between two kinds of laws, i.e.

- 1) those which ~~a~~re absolutely necessary for salvation and a perfect life, and
  - 2) those which are adapted especially to the old covenant.
- 1) Jesus did not bring a new law but confirmed that which was already given in the Old Testament, especially the two commandments of love. As a second example he mentions the Decalogue, excepting however the Fourth Commandment. The commandments of the Decalogue are called the natural precepts. From the beginning God had implanted them into mankind. The Patriarchs had written them in their hearts and souls and therefore did not need any prohibitory mandates. In Egypt however the Israelites somehow lost this knowledge of righteousness and love. Therefore, when God led them out of Egypt, He gave them the Decalogue revealing the way of life by it. Jesus did not abrogate them (because man is justified by these commandments) but he extended and fulfilled them.
  - 2) Another set of ordinances was made necessary by their idol worship, i.e. the golden calf. As the Israelites desired to be slaves, God put them into slavery by means of the yoke of bondage,

namely the ceremonial precepts. Like Justin, Irenaeus discerns three different meanings in these precepts, but he stresses the second aspect: they were given for the benefit of Israel, they did not cut them off from God but were intended to bring them back to the real, eternal, spiritual and heavenly things. Their slavery under the yoke of bondage prevented them from falling back into the slavery of Egypt (idol-worship).

If Christ is called the end of the Law it means that he came to deliver us from this slavery under the yoke of bondage, but not to abrogate the natural precepts. These are common to Jews and Christians. Being subject to Christ we are set free from the bonds in order to love Him, and in this way the natural precepts receive growth and completion in us.

As has already been mentioned, the Didascalia develops the thoughts of Irenaeus in a radical way. We might say that the writer of the Didascalia faced a danger similar to that which Barnabas had to avert, but his theology is influenced by Justin and Irenaeus. Both Barnabas and the Didascalia endeavour to prevent Christians from falling back under the ceremonial law and therefore both split the Old Testament in two, leaving behind one part and taking over the second one. Barnabas draws the line of demarcation between the literal and the allegorical meaning of the commandments, the Didascalia between the First and the Second Legislations.

If we compare the Didascalia with Irenaeus, the main difference lies in the valuation of the Second Legislation. Justin as well as Irenaeus distinguishes three different meanings in the ceremonial law, two positive and one negative. For the Didascalia its purpose is exclusively negative, a punishment for the sins of Israel, a sign of God's hot anger, a curse to slavery. Therefore the coming of Christ too is seen in a merely antithetical relation to the cere-

monial law. He fully and completely abolished the Second Legislation and promised rest to those who laboured and were heavy laden under this law of death. The writer cannot discern any paedagogical purpose or typical meaning in the ceremonial law. If Christians read about these things in the Old Testament they cannot but praise God that He delivered us from all these bonds.

The Didascalia does not equate the Decalogue with the "natural precepts" like Irenaeus, but the writer is aware that the Romans also hold the law (of the Decalogue) which means that everybody has to obey it whether he likes it or not.

As the first six books of the Apostolic Constitutions are based upon the Didascalia it was not necessary to discuss them in a special paragraph. But it is interesting to notice how the thoughts of the Didascalia are developed in this document. In some way the Apostolic Constitutions might be called a compromise between Irenaeus and the Didascalia. Here the Decalogue is called "a plain law" given in order to "assist the law of nature". Its judgments are made according to the law of nature". The ceremonial law is mainly considered as a mortifying burden, but not without positive purpose. The offerings should make the Israelites mindful of God and urge them to "run back again to that law which is inserted by me (God) in the nature of all men."

We have already pointed to the fact that there appears a certain inconsistency in the Apostolic Constitutions. This is obviously the result of the merging of several sources in this document. After the distinction between the original law and the additional precepts, and the praise of the Decalogue which is called pure, saving, holy, perfect, never to fail, unspotted, converting souls, the writer proceeds:

"Which law is so very holy and righteous, that even our Saviour, when on a certain time He healed one leper, and afterwards nine, said to the first, 'Go, show thyself to the high priest, and offer the gift



which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them' etc."<sup>1</sup>. This quotation not only fails to bear upon the previous praise of the Decalogue, but in contradiction of the whole argument shows Jesus putting men under the "bond of servitude". The writer may have felt himself that there was somewhere a weak point in his theology (or in his ability of compilation), as he later declares: "Christ... has completed the law, but has taken away the additional precepts, although not all of them, yet at least the more grievous ones."<sup>2</sup> There are more contradictions caused by the merging of different opinions, but it is not important for our subject to make a further analysis of the Apostolic Constitutions.

### 3. Conclusions concerning the catechetical instruction up to the fourth century.<sup>3</sup>

#### a) The absence of the Decalogue in the catechetical instruction.

From the previous investigation we may conclude that<sup>in</sup> the first four centuries the Decalogue was not used as basis for the catechetical

1) Apost. Const. Book VI ch. XIX

2) ib. ch. XXII

3) In our present research we have not mentioned those sources which practically contribute nothing to our subject. We give only a few instances on this score: According to the Letter of Pliny the Christians in their meeting put themselves under the obligation not to commit certain crimes. The examples mentioned are in relation with several commandments of the Decalogue. Was this code then used in the worship of the early Church? (cf. O. Cullmann, Urchristentum und Gottesdienst, Zürich 1950 p.25: "Es scheint sich hier um den Dekalog zu handeln.") It is however not possible to draw a firm conclusion concerning the use of the Decalogue in the early Church from this letter. See M. Dibelius, RGG<sup>2</sup> IV p. 1299: "Die Wiedergabe ist natürlich ungenau, weil P. nur hervorhebt, was vom Standpunkt der Behörde wichtig ist und die Befragten wohl nur auf seine Fragen geantwortet haben." cf. Zetzschwitz, op.cit. p. 166: "Man wird beachten müssen, dass die Christen dies nur aussagten, weil ihnen entgegenstehende Verbrechen schuld gegeben wurden."

teaching of the Church. In the ancient Church orders no allusion is made to this Code, and the contents of the catechetical sermons exclude the possibility that the Ten Commandments had a central place in the instruction of the catechumens and candidates for baptism.

When a pagan wanted to become a member of the Church he was first given a catechesis of admission. After being catechumen for 2-3 years - which time was occasionally shortened, but very often extended - he could enrol for baptism and was submitted to special training during Lent. We can thus distinguish three kinds of instruction: a) the catechesis of admission, b) the instruction of the catechumens lasting several years, c) the instruction of the candidates for baptism during Lent.

The catechetical school of Alexandria was not concerned particularly with preparation for baptism. Clement's "Students in the Alexandrian school of Pantaenus, whom he succeeded as head, were mostly well-to-do Greeks - therefore neither children nor the unlettered nor catechumens in the pre-baptismal sense." (G.S. Sloyan, *Shaping the Christian Message*, New York 1959 p.7). Neither with Origen nor with Clement does the Decalogue play an outstanding part. For the discrimination between the catechetical school which prepared the catechumens for baptism and the Διδασκαλεῖα see *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*<sup>2</sup> I p. 323 ff.

As to Tertullian a single saying like that in *De Anima* 37 ("ego ad deum potius argumentabor hunc modum temporis, ut decem menses decalogo magis inaugurent hominem, ut tanto temporis numero nascamur, quanto disciplinae numero renascimur") leads to quite controversial conclusions. Sachsse, (*Die Lehre von der kirchlichen Erziehung*, p.48) takes it as a proof that the Decalogue was a subject matter of catechetical instruction. Zezschwitz (op.cit.) is reluctant to draw any conclusion concerning the catechetical practice from this saying, whereas Rentschka (*Die Dekalogkatechese des hl. Augustinus*) holds that Tertullian does not allude to the Decalogue at all, but refers to the ten articles of faith. cf. Cyril: *deka logoi*; Gregory of Nazianzus: *decalogus*; Augustinus: *numerus disciplinae*.

For a more extensive research dealing with the references to the Decalogue in the first centuries see Rentschka, op.cit. and Zezschwitz, op. cit. p. 164 ff.

- a) On the catechesis of admission we have a delightful work by Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*.<sup>1</sup> At the request of a deacon of Carthage, Augustine wrote a treatise on the art of catechizing and gave two models of addresses, one of some length, the other very brief. This is the only treatise on this subject which has come down to us. In it the commandment of love is paramount, the Decalogue does not appear. Nevertheless it seems possible that quite divergent conclusions concerning the use of the Decalogue may be drawn from this document.<sup>2</sup>
- b) During the time of the catechumenate - which extended from two years to a lifetime - the catechumens attended the first part of the Church service (*missa catechumenorum*), thus following the usual scripture reading from Old and New Testaments and the sermons. In the fourth century there is no evidence of any special instruction of the catechumens beyond the ordinary Church-services.<sup>3</sup>

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1) see p. 251

2) see p. 251 f.

3) Ferd. Probst is of the opinion that the heyday of Catechetical instruction was in the third century, because at that time the catechumens were given regular instruction during the whole time of preparation (2-3 years). See  
 F. Probst, *Geschichte der katholischen Katechese*, Breslau 1886, p.32, do.  
*Katechese und Predigt vom Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des sechsten Jahrhunderts*, Breslau 1884, p.46:  
 "Die Blüthezeit erstreckt sich vom Ende des 2. bis zum Ende des 3. Jahrhunderts und während dieser Periode ertheilte der Clerus den Unterricht. Mit dem 4. Jahrhundert begann die Zeit des Verfalles, in welcher nicht mehr den kirchlichen Katecheten, sondern dem allgemeinen öffentlichen Gottesdienste und der Familie die Aufgabe zufiel, die Katechumenen der ersten Klasse zu erziehen und zu belehren."  
 As a matter of fact we do not know enough about the practice of the second and third centuries to draw such a conclusion. Probst himself does not seem able to prove his point with convincing facts. His main argument is obviously the sparseness of "catechetical literature" in the fourth and fifth centuries if compared with that of the third. (*Geschichte...* p.32). As proofs of catechetical literature before the fourth century he mentions the 3 Books of Theophilus to Autolytus and the *Paidagogos* of Clemens Alex. (ib. p.16). But it is hardly

c) As has been set forth above, Lent was the outstanding time for catechetical instruction of candidates for baptism. We know that the Creed and the Lord's prayer occupied a central place in this teaching, and we possess a considerable number of catechetical sermons delivered during that time. These sermons do not of course cover the whole subject matter discussed with the candidates during Lent. They were probably given at least one lecture every day, whereas we possess at most only 19 sermons for this time<sup>1</sup>. But if the Decalogue had played an important role in the daily teaching we would certainly in these sermons have some allusions to it, as is the case with Augustine<sup>2</sup>. With the exception of Theodore of Mopsuestia no definite pattern seems to have been used as basis for the catechetical sermons of the Church Fathers, and in the case of Theodore the ethical advice does not follow the Decalogue, but the Lord's prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Our argument, however, is not exclusively from silence. There are several references to the subjects taught the catechumens.<sup>4</sup>

From Milan we have the following scheme of instruction: weekdays, except Saturday, at the 3d and 9th hour catechetical lectures on the following subjects<sup>5</sup>:

five first weeks: Genesis and Proverbs

Holy week: Job and Tobit

De Myst. I,1 refers to Old Testament lessons on Psalms in general.

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possible to derive from these writings definite conclusions concerning the institution of catechetical instruction. May be that in some places there were special catechists who gave instruction to the catechumens, but the evidence is so vague that we have to refrain from far-reaching conclusions.

1) Cyril of Jerusalem, see p. 183 ff.

2) see § 13

3) p. 190 ff.

4) see T. Thompson, The Offices of Baptism and Confirmation, Cambridge

5) de Myst. I 4,25; 7,59; 9,89.

Athanasius<sup>1</sup> quotes as subject matter for catechetical instruction: Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, Didache, Shepherd.

As to Jerusalem we have the account of Etheria who visited this town probably at the time of Cyril's successor John. According to this pilgrim, during Lent the bishop gave a lecture to the candidates on every fast-day. "The bishop goes through Scripture from Genesis on, expounding first the literal and then the spiritual sense, at the same time teaching the resurrection and all things concerning the faith."

According to Origen in Alexandria the moral instruction for beginners was connected with the reading of Esther, Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, further Gospels, Epistles and Psalms.<sup>2</sup>

Summarily we may conclude that the ethical teaching of catechumens was considered of great importance and even preceded the explanation of the Creed and the Lord's prayer. This moral instruction was in the first place related to the reading of the Old Testament and Apocryphal books, occasionally to the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas, whereas the Decalogue is not mentioned at all. Though Exodus and Deuteronomy do not seem to have belonged to the preferred books we may assume that the catechumens did not ignore the events at Mount Sinai. But from all we know about that period the possibility is well-nigh excluded that this Code was ever made the basis of catechetical-ethical teaching.<sup>3</sup>

#### b) The growing importance of the Decalogue in early theology.

The question of the continuous validity of the Old Testament Law had found various answers in the second century. Already with Irenaeus

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1) Festal Letter 39

2) Orig. hom. Num. XVII,1

3) cf. the statements by Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 185: "Es ist rein aus der Luft gegriffene Construction, wenn Augusti mit Vieler Nachfolge behauptete, auf den niederen Stufen des Catechumenates, ehe der eigentliche Glaubensunterricht begonnen, sei der Dekalog gelehrt

the Decalogue was given an outstanding place within the Law. There is thus a definite development since Paul in the conception of the Decalogue. We cannot here enter into the details of this development, but shall try to trace the basic factors which influenced and determined the theology of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists in the question of the Law and especially the Decalogue. At least three items seem to have played a significant part in this respect: 1) a christological misunderstanding, 2) a gnostic conception of the Old Testament Law, 3) the Stoic conception of natural law.

### Christ as Lawgiver.

It is an often remarked fact that the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists failed to understand the real meaning of Christ's life and death and its implications for Christian life<sup>1</sup>. Torrance<sup>2</sup> has demonstrated convincingly how their conception of the Law is the counterpart of their failure to understand grace in its radical New Testament sense, and this means nothing else than that they did not grasp the basic significance of the death of Christ.

In these writings Christ is not so much the Mediator as the Lawgiver. It is no longer the new reality created by Christ which forms the basis and starting point of preaching and teaching, but all stress is laid on man's obedience. The unconditional grace of God offered to mankind is changed into a "grace" which is gained by man's efforts. The indicative which is basic in the New Testament and which always and absolutely precedes the imperative, has disappeared, and what remains is the call to obedience. "What took absolute precedence was God's

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worden.", and p. 189: "Der Dekalog war im Katechumenenunterrichte der alten Kirche vollständig verdrängt, und selbst auf der untersten Stufe der Taufbereitung, wo eine Stelle für den alttestamentlichen paedagogus hätte offen und übrig gelassen erscheinen können, dominiert schon mit vollstem Bewusstsein das Liebesgebot als der neutestamentliche Ausdruck des Gesetzes."

1) see e.g. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers*, Edinburgh 1948

V.E. Hasler, *Gesetz und Evangelium in der alten Kirche bis Origenes*, Zürich 1953

2) op.cit. , see esp. conclusion p. 133-141



call to a new life in obedience to revealed truth. Grace, as far as it was grasped, was subsidiary to that."<sup>1</sup>

It seems that this fatal change was caused mainly by two factors: On the one hand the Judaistic theology was of great influence and was somehow sanctioned by the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in which "we have the break-up of some of the leading ideas of Hebrew revelation, and their replacement by much paler categories"<sup>2</sup>. Like Paul, the Apostolic Fathers were arguing with the representatives of Judaism. But if Paul put the Gospel in the place of the Law, and God's grace in the stead of man's hopeless strive for righteousness, the Fathers and Apologists replaced the Old Law merely by a New one and the stress remained on man's endeavour.<sup>3</sup>

The second factor which had its share in the distortion of the Gospel was the influence of Greek language and Hellenistic mode of thought. Naturalistic thinking is always opposed to the doctrine of justification by grace alone. If the missionary and translator of the biblical message fail to disentangle the pertinent terms of the new language from their traditional meaning, giving them a new content, their message will certainly be misunderstood. In the case of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists it seems that, owing to their Hellenistic background, they themselves misunderstood the Gospel and interpreted it in several respects in the light of naturalistic Hellenistic thought.

These two factors are of course strongly related to each other. Naturalistic thinking prevented the fathers from understanding the core of the Gospel, and because grace was misunderstood the Judaistic and Hellenistic conceptions were not basically affected.

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1) Torrance, op.cit. p. 133

2) ib. p. 133

3) "Jesus ist... der Lehrer und Bringer eines allgemeinen, moralischen Gesetzes und als solcher ein Führer zum ewigen Leben. Die biblischen Schriften interessieren nur, soweit sie moralische Anweisungen enthalten." Hasler, op.cit. p.42.

If obedience, the right shaping of one's life, the attaining of rewards, thus became the main concern of Christian teaching, it is self-evident that the Law should be given a central place. Christ is called the "new Law" or the "new Law-giver" and, especially in the discussion with Jews and Gnostics, the relation between the Law of the Old and the New Testament became a subject of particular interest. The Apologists had to explain why it was possible that the Christians were obedient to God (who is the same in the Old and in the New Testaments) without submitting themselves to the whole bulk of Old Testament Commandments. For Paul there existed no problem here: the Old Testament Law was limited ethnically as well as temporally. But as soon as Christ was understood as Law-giver, the momentous change from the Old to the New Age was not grasped<sup>1</sup> and the mind stuck to the fruitless question how the two Laws were related to each other. An analysis of the Old Testament Law and discrimination between different kinds of commandments was inevitable. As we shall now show, it is a striking fact that it fell to gnosis to pave the way for this doubtful undertaking in the Christian Church.

#### The letter of Ptolemaeus to Flora.

Ptolemaeus<sup>2</sup> in his letter to Flora distinguishes three kinds of commandments in the Old Testament: 1) the precepts given by God, 2) those things which were set down by Moses of his own authority and devising, 3) the additions of the Elders. This differentiation is made to a certain degree by Jesus himself<sup>3</sup> and does not concern us here. Among the commandments given by God (= the Demiurge) Ptolemaeus distinguishes three groups:

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- 1) "Weil weder Gesetz noch Evangelium, weder historisch noch systematisch, christologisch bezogen sind, fehlt auch ein eigentliches Verstandnis der Offenbarungsgeschichte... Gesetzesoffenbarung und Christusergeignis fallen zusammen, Sinai und Golgatha werden gleichzeitig, besser: überzeitig." Hasler, op.cit. p. 43
  - 2) ca. 160-180, head of the Italian school of the Valentinians.
  - 3) Mt. 19,8

- a) The pure Law, unmixed with evil, which the Saviour came not to destroy, but to fulfil. This is the Decalogue.
- b) The Law having an admixture of evil and unrighteousness, which was abolished by the Saviour (e.g. the lex talionis and the command to slay murderers; this is called the δεύτερος νόμος (second law) and shows the inconsistency of the lawgiver).
- c) The things which have a typical and symbolical meaning and are ordained as figures of better and spiritual things (e.g. sacrifices, circumcision, Sabbath, fasting etc.). The outward and material observance of these precepts is abolished, but according to their spiritual content these things are carried on: the offering of animals is replaced by the oblation of spiritual praises and beneficence towards one's neighbours.

This document is very interesting because here - as far as we can see - for the first time the Decalogue is separated from the whole of the Old Testament Law and given an outstanding place.

Though the views of Ptolemaeus were repudiated by the Church, nevertheless his method of discriminating between different Old Testament commandments became customary. Irenaeus speaks of the similarity between basic commandments of the Old and New Testaments and thinks especially of the Decalogue and the commandment of love. Christ, according to him, has fulfilled, extended and deepened the natural precepts which are identical with the Ten Commandments. The commandments of the second and third group which were abolished by Jesus are of course not attributed to God's inconsistency - as is the case with Ptolemaeus, - but to man's apostasy from God. The "secondary commandments" were intended as punishment and had moreover an educational function. As types and symbols the ceremonies pointed to Christ.

The ideas of Ptolemaeus are still more distinct in the Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum. Here the commandments outside the Decalogue and the Book of Covenant are attributed to the "Second Legislation"

which is exclusively a sign of God's wrath. A mysterious relation is established between the Decalogue, the name of Jesus and his statement in Mt. 5,18. The gulf between the Decalogue (the Book of Covenant is practically of no significance) and the rest of the Law is final and absolute: Jesus renews, confirms and fulfills the Ten Words of the Law, but the "Second Legislation" is abrogated by him. The Decalogue is indissoluble, it is the law of the faithful, but the rest of the Old Testament commandments are temporary and dissoluble, the Christians are freed from it.

What has actually happened? The Jewish idea of the perpetuity of the Law is taken over by the Christians of the second century, but this character of perpetuity - under the influence of Gnosticism - is now confined to the Decalogue.<sup>1</sup>

#### The stoic conception of natural law.

This new evaluation of the Decalogue received strong support from a conception of Stoic philosophy, i.e. the idea of natural law<sup>2</sup>. The development in the use of this term in the early church is very instructive. We may assume that Irenaeus borrowed the conception of "natural law" from the philosophical jargon of his time, but he interpreted it in consonance with his theology, especially with his idea of "recapitulatio". The natural commandments (*naturalia praecepta*) are not derived from reason, but are always connected with God's action and revelation. When God created man he implanted the natural precepts in his heart, but when they had fallen into oblivion God revealed them anew to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. The Decalogue is thus identical with the natural law, i.e. the law of creation. The other commandments were given to Israel because of its obstinacy. Christ has restored man according to God's image which implies the restoration

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1) That the Jews did not accept any such limitation is demonstrated on p. 61

2) For the following see esp. Felix Flückiger, *Geschichte des Naturrechts I*, Zollikon-Zürich 1954.

of nature. By renewing and fulfilling nature, Christ also renewed and fulfilled the natural precepts in his interpretation of the Decalogue.

The consequences of the introduction of this philosophical term into theology were not perceptible at that time. But the conception of natural law had been brought into the Church like a Trojan horse and eventually was bound to reveal its original meaning, first competing with the biblical interpretation, but later reducing it to insignificance.

The interpretation given by Irenaeus is maintained more or less by Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and others of that time, though occasionally the philosophical conception of natural law, as it were, hints at the fatal possibilities hidden in it.

It seems that with Ambrose of Milan (340-397) the stoic ethics gained decisive influence in the Church<sup>1</sup>. Ambrose equates the conceptions "good" and "useful", he refers to the example of nature as teacher and interprets the "good" according to the four cardinal virtues<sup>2</sup>.

In relation to the Decalogue, the adoption of the Stoic distinction between "perfect duty" (officium primum vel perfectum, *κατόρθωμα*) and middle duty (officium medium, *καὶ ἥκον*) plays a significant part. This theory is demonstrated in Ambrose's interpretation of Mt. 19,16 ff. Jesus first points the rich young man to Commandments of the Decalogue which are medium duties. But what Jesus further asked from him is the perfect duty, like love of enemies and prayer for persecutors. By means of this stoic conception Ambrose introduces a double ethic in christian theology:

- 1) the medium duties are connected with the Decalogue and the commandment of love, i.e. the natural law. Everybody has to keep this law in order to attain eternal life.

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1) see Flückiger, op.cit. p. 364 ff.

2) wisdom (sapientia), justice (iustitia), bravery (fortitudo), moderation (temperantia).

2) in order to gain special grace we are given counsels (concordia evangelica) concerning the perfect duty, but obedience to these counsels is voluntary, they promise extraordinary rewards. The idea of "opus supererogatorium" is thus conceived by Ambrose, though the term appears only with Augustine.

Though Ambrose has not developed these thoughts systematically, he has paved the way for the following fatal development. Eternal life becomes the reward for the keeping of the biblical Law which is identical with natural law. The "imitation of Christ" is regarded as evangelical counsel and could practically only be realized in the religious order.

The appearance of the Decalogue and its implications in the theology of the early Church is an exciting subject. But as our main concern lies in the part this code played in the catechetical teaching, we could only point out some outstanding factors in this development. At any rate it has become evident that three rather questionable godparents presented the Decalogue at the font of the early Church: a Judaistic-naturalistic misunderstanding of the Gospel, a gnostic interpretation of the Old Testament, and the Stoic idea of natural law.<sup>1</sup>

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1) For the course which the idea of natural law in connexion with the Decalogue took in the later Middle Ages see § 15.2

We were not able to make use in this chapter of the study by P.G. Verwijs, *Evangelium und neues Gesetz in der ältesten Christenheit bis auf Marcion*, Utrecht 1960.



§ 13. Augustine<sup>1</sup>.

1. Augustine's development in relation to the Decalogue.

In our investigation of the catechetical teaching until the end of the 4th century we were not able to discover any evidence that the Decalogue as a whole had been used in the instruction of the catechumens. In Augustine's teaching, however, the Decalogue gained a more significant place, though it cannot be said that it formed the centre of his ethical instruction. The possibility that Augustine in his use of the Decalogue took over an older tradition is made highly improbable by the fact that in his early writings the Decalogue did not play the part it attained in the later period of his life. By investigation of his writings we are able to trace the development of his thought concerning the Ten Commandments.

In "De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII" (388/391) the time of Quadragesima is explained as consisting of four times ten days, the number ten pointing to the ten articles of the Creed. (After the year 400 Augustine always connects this number with the Decalogue). Similarly the number of 153 fishes caught by the disciples after the resurrection of the Lord<sup>2</sup> is not yet related to the Ten Commandments in this early time.

In "De serm. Domini in monte sec. Mattheus libri duo" (393) the eight beatitudes are considered the perfect standard of Christian life<sup>3</sup>. In a later period however it is the Commandment of love related to the Decalogue which is put in the foreground. In lib. I. c. XI n.31.32 he explains the accuser<sup>4</sup> of Mt. 5,25 to be God's law and divine Scripture<sup>5</sup>.

1) The Latin quotations are from Augustini Opera, ed. Order of St. Benedict, Paris 1836-39; the English quotations, if not otherwise stated, from the "Library of Fathers", Oxford 1838-61. In this chapter we have made wide use of the careful study by P. Rentschka. Die Dekalogkatechese des Hl. Augustin, Kempten 1905.

2) Joh. 21,11

3) "... inveniet in eo, quantum ad mores optimos pertinet, perfectum vitae christianae modum" I,1

4) adversarius

5) id est lex eius et Scriptura divina

but in serm. 9 (ca 400) the accuser is interpreted as the Decalogue.

In 400 Augustine in his epistle 55 ad Januarium c. 9-15 treats the subject of the Sabbath. In this letter he declares: "Of all the Ten Commandments, that which related to the Sabbath was the only one in which the thing commanded was typical; the bodily rest enjoined being a type which we have received as a means of our instruction, but not as a duty binding also upon us... As to all the things enjoined in the other commandments, we are to yield to them an obedience in which there is nothing typical... They are to be literally observed." As to the number of the large fishes<sup>1</sup> he already connects it with the number 17 (1+2+3+4 up to 17 make 153) but still does not see a relation to the Decalogue. Here 17, consisting of 10 + 7, signifies "man (in the new life) made perfect and at rest, purified in body and in soul by the pure words of God, which are like silver purged from its dross, seven times refined<sup>2</sup>, shall receive his reward, the denarius<sup>3</sup>, so that with that reward the numbers 10 and 7 meet in him."<sup>4</sup>

Later on the number 10 ordinarily becomes a symbol of the Decalogue. The number of the fishes represents the Church in the consummation. It consists of those who have kept the Ten Commandments with the aid of the sevenfold gift of the Spirit<sup>5</sup>. Thus 10 + 7 = 17, and from 17 Augustine comes to 153 in the way described above. In his later years this became the fixed interpretation of the catch and was repeated every year when he had to preach about Joh. 21,1-14 at Easter time.<sup>6</sup>

Ambrosius, Augustine's teacher, interpreted the "new song"<sup>7</sup> as the life of the Christian. Augustine goes farther and says that the 10 strings of the harp represent the Ten Commandments: "Decem chordarum psalterium,

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1) Joh. 21,11

2) Ps. 12,6

3) Mt. 20,9-10

4) c. 17

5) Is. 11,2-3

6) see sermones 248-251 and the detailed interpretation in Tract. 122 in ev. Joh. n. 8-9.

7) Ps. 143,9; 33,2-3; 92,3

decem praecepta legis intelliguntur. Cantare autem et psallere, negotium esse solet amantium. Vetus enim homo in timore est, novus in amore... charitas ergo cantat canticum novum."<sup>1</sup>

There seem to be especially three factors which brought Augustine to this unprecedented use of the Decalogue in his teaching:

- a) His discussion with the Manicheans compelled him to defend the Old Testament against this heresy. As Faustus attacked expressly the Decalogue, Augustine not only defended this code, but used it as a weapon to repudiate their errors<sup>2</sup>.
- b) In Rom. 13,9-10 it is said that the whole law is summed up in love. As example Paul mentions four commandments of the Decalogue. As Augustine puts love central in his ethical teaching, he comes to the following conclusion: if all the commandments are summed up in love, then the meaning of love can be explained by the interpretation of the Decalogue, the commandments I - III<sup>3</sup> showing love towards God, the commandments IV - X love towards our neighbour.
- c) His special liking for cipher-symbolism led him to find the Decalogue wherever he could detect the number 10 in the Bible<sup>4</sup>. Here, as in the case of love and the Ten Commandments (see above b) we have a sort of inverted equation systematically applied: Decalogue = 10, thus the number 10 = Decalogue, i.e. this number is considered everywhere in some mysterious relation to the Decalogue. It is not surprising that with this method the Decalogue can be detected in many places in the Old and New Testaments and thus becomes more and more significant for theological thinking.

1) Sermo 33, also Sermo 9.

2) See: Contra Faustum Man. 1. XV cc. 4-8; 1.XIX c.9 and cc. 18-23

3) according to his numbering, see § 3

4) Quadragesima 4 times 10 (Serm. 125,9; 205,1; 210,8; 270,3), harp of 10 strings (Serm. 33 and 9), 10 plagues in Egypt (Serm. 8), 153 fishes (Serm. 248-251), length of the ark (10 times 30), Noah the 10th from Adam (Contr. Faust. XII,14) ten thousand talents (Serm. 83,6), tenth hour: John 1,39 (in Joh. ev. VII,10).

We cannot discern with certainty in which year Augustine started using the Decalogue in his teaching<sup>1</sup>. At any rate in 400 the Ten Commandments had a firm place in Augustine's theology, though he had not yet discovered the relation of the 153 fishes to this code.

## 2. The anti-Manichean period.

Faustus rejected the Old Testament because "the God of the Hebrews is in poverty and beggary, and cannot do what he promises. In his stone tablets he promises you gold and silver, and abundance of food, and the land of Canaan. If he cannot give these things to the synagogue, his proper wife... how can he bestow them on you who are strangers?"<sup>2</sup> Then Faustus points to Rom. 7,2-3 and concludes that "there is a spiritual adultery in being united to Christ before repudiating the Law. We who have been converted to Christ from heathenism, look upon the God of the Hebrews not merely as dead, but as never having existed."

In order to refute these ideas Augustine gives a large exposition about the meaning of the Old Testament and an interpretation of Jesus' saying that he had come to fulfil the Law. We shall consider only those parts in which Augustine deals with the Decalogue. He connects the stone tablets with the "living stone, rejected by men, but chosen of God, and precious"<sup>3</sup> and exhorts the faithful, "Fear not, then, to read these tablets, they are from thy Husband". The Law is still the same in the New Testament, but our relation to it has changed: "Fear not the tablets... only be not under the law, lest fear prevent thy fulfilling it: but under grace, that love, which is the fulfilling of the law, may be in thee." Then Augustine quotes Rom. 13,9-10 and explains that one table contains the precept of love to God, and the other of love to man. "And He who first sent these tablets Himself came to enjoin<sup>4</sup> those precepts on which

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1) Rentschka thinks that it was in 395.

2) Contra Faust. Man. XV,1

3) 1 Pet. 2,4-8

4) commendavit

hang the law and the prophets". "And these two precepts are identical with the ten<sup>1</sup> of which three relate to God, and seven to our neighbour."<sup>2</sup>

Here Augustine has already accomplished the equation which became fundamental for his further handling of the Decalogue. Paul said: the commandments of the Decalogue (D) are contained in the word: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (love). Jesus said: the Law and the Prophets (LP) hang on the precept of love to God and love to man.

If thus  $D = \text{love}$ , and  $LP = \text{love}$ , then

$LP = D$  (i.e. the Ten Commandments stand for the Law and Prophets).

Further, if  $D = \text{love}$  (the Decalogue is contained in love), then

$\text{love} = D$  (love can be defined by the Ten Commandments).

This is the basic thought developed in Contra Faust. Man. XV,4.<sup>3</sup>

There is however an important difference between the relation of the Jews and that of the Christians to the Decalogue. This is explained in XV,8: "The true bride of Christ... serving God no longer in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of Spirit, is not under the law, but under grace." What does that mean?

It is true that the Law, though holy, just and good, condemns and kills man, as Paul explains in Rom. 7. But for Christians, the spirit is joined to the letter of the Law and enables them to keep the commandments. If Paul says "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"<sup>4</sup> this does not signify that there is an absolute opposition between the two. In another place Paul states that "knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth".<sup>5</sup> "The apostle certainly had no desire to be puffed up; but he had knowledge, because knowledge joined with love not only does not

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1) quae duo praecepta ipsa sunt decem

2) op.cit. XV.4. For Augustine's peculiar division of the Decalogue according to which the three first commandments (according to our numbering 1-4) relate to the Trinity see his explanation in Quaest. in Ex. 71.

3) For the influence of Augustine's conception of the Decalogue on a sabbatarian interpretation of the Lord's Day see W. Thomas, Der Sonntag im frühen Mittelalter, Göttingen 1929 p. 13 ff.

4) 2 Cor. 3,6

5) 1 Cor. 8,1

puff up, but strengthens." So the letter (law) if taken by itself, kills, but in connexion with the spirit, is no longer the letter and the law in the old sense. "The same law which was given by Moses becomes through Jesus Christ grace and truth; for the spirit is joined to the letter, that the righteousness of the law might begin to be fulfilled, which when unfulfilled only added the guilt of transgression." Thus if it is said that the Christian is dead to the law, then this may be understood only in the sense: dead to the "law without grace". To reproach the law "would be blasphemy against its author". "This is thy crime; for though the apostle tells thee that the law is holy, and the commandments holy, and just, and good, thou doest not acknowledge it as the production of a good being."

If it is said that Christ fulfilled the Law then this has a double meaning: a) the typical observances (ceremonial law) are fulfilled in that sense that Christ accomplished what was prefigured by them. These types pass away when they are accomplished and therefore have not to be observed any more. b) the moral precepts are distinct from typical sacraments. Do Christians not observe the precepts of the Decalogue? Of course they do, and thus they are fulfilled (by the Christians) by the aid of divine grace, in the faith which worketh by love. So both, ceremonial and moral precepts are fulfilled in Christ<sup>1</sup>.

To this period belong the sermones 8, 9, 33 and 109. Sermo 9 is probably the first one of this series. It is very long and shows a lack of homogeneity. After a short introduction Augustine asks about the meaning of the "adversary" in Mt. 5,25. The answer is, "Sermo Dei adversarius tuus est", and in order to prove the correctness of this answer Augustine quotes the commandments of the Decalogue with a short explanation of each, showing how these words of God command the contrary

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1) XIX, 18



of what man intends to do and so become his adversary. He stops at the Seventh Commandment, then goes back to reinterpret several commandments and finally comes to the text of his Sermon "de decem Chordis": "I will sing a new song to thee, o God; upon a tenstringed harp I will play to thee."<sup>1</sup> Augustine introduces himself as the harp player, his ten strings are the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue. For the third time in this sermon he sets forth the meaning of these commandments. "Tota lex in duobus praeceptis est, in dilectione Dei et dilectione proximi; ad duo itaque praecepta, id est, ad dilectionem Dei et proximi pertinet Decalogus."

The Jews carried the harp, but they did not sing. As far as they obeyed the law it was out of fear, but not because they loved righteousness. Only the new man can sing the new song, therefore "Put off your old nature and be renewed"<sup>2</sup>. Only he who loves is able to sing.

Later on Augustine brings Ps. 144,1 in relation to the Decalogue. "The Lord... trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle." In the theater of the pagans, the fighter and the harper are two different persons, but in God's theater they are one and the same. Therefore, pull the ten strings of your harp and you will kill the beasts (sins) which are fighting against you (e.g. Fifth Commandment: bestia impietatis, Sixth: bestia crudelitatis, Seventh: bestia libidinis, Eighth: bestia rapacitatis etc.)<sup>3</sup> Then Augustine discusses several commandments from the point of view of Tob. IV,16 (Golden Rule). "Decem enim praecepta ad duo illa referuntur, sicuti audivimus, ut diligamus Deum et proximum, et duo illa ad unum illud. Unum est autem, Quod tibi fieri non vis, alii ne feceris. Ibi continentur decem, ibi continentur duo."<sup>4</sup> Finally he exhorts his congregation by quoting and explaining

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1) Ps. 144,9

2) Eph. 4,22-23

3) For this interpretation of the 10 strings see also en. Ps. 32; Ps. 91 n.5; Ps. 143 n.16. In en. Ps. 91 n.5 the song is related to the words, the harp to the deeds.

4) Serm. 9.14.

different sayings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount and other passages from the Gospels.

Rentschka may be right in surmising that sermo 9 is Augustine's first sermon on the Decalogue where he still is experimenting with the matter. The other sermons which deal with the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup> are much shorter and the train of thought is concise.

Sermo 109 is based on Luke 12,56-59. The adversary is interpreted as God's word which says "Thou shalt not"<sup>2</sup>. But if we listen to this adversary and consent he becomes our friend. How this happens is demonstrated with the commandments of the second table, but Augustine does not give an interpretation of the commandments.

Sermo 33 is an interpretation of Ps. 144,9 and has much resemblance to sermo 9. Augustine points to Paul's distinguishing two covenants<sup>3</sup>, and adds that servitude results in fear, but liberty in love. After quoting Rom. 8,15 and 1 Joh. 4,18 he declares that "love sings the new song", then he combines again Rom. 13,8-10; Mt. 5,17 and John 13,34 with the Decalogue<sup>4</sup>. He explains the commandments of the first table, especially the Sabbath commandment, which is only to be observed spiritually. To prove that the commandment to honour one's parents is really the first commandment of the second table Augustine quotes Eph. 6,2: "This is the first commandment", omitting however the end of Paul's sentence: "with a promise".

Sermo 8 connects the 10 plagues with the Ten Commandments and is a striking example of Augustine's ingenuity in finding hidden meanings and references to make a text say what he wants it to say.

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1) Serm. 109, 33 and 8, see below.

2) e.g. "Delectat te adulterari, dicit tibi sermo Dei, Noli".

3) Gal. 4,22.24

4) Non ergo mirum, si mandatum novum cantat canticum novum: quia, sicut dictum est, psalterium decem chordarum decem praecepta sunt legis, et plenitudo legis dilectio est.

### 3. The anti- Pelagian period.

In the anti- Pelagian period (beginning in the year 412) Augustine was compelled to tackle the question of the Law from another point of view. Though he does not bring in a new element in his use and interpretation of the Decalogue there can be observed a change in emphasis. The main controversial points in the Pelagian teaching were<sup>1</sup>

- 1) that Adam's sin had injured no-one but himself
- 2) that infants come into the world in the same state of innocence as belonged to Adam before his fall
- 3) that all men can keep the commandments of God if they will,
- 4) that God will distribute his rewards and his punishments strictly according to merit (man receives what he deserves)
- 5) that sinlessness<sup>2</sup> is a condition achievable by any man in this life, and that even before the coming of Christ there had been men whose lives were sinless.

Over against this teaching Augustine had to stress that it is impossible for man outside God's grace to keep the Law and thus be sinless, because the "liberum arbitrium"<sup>3</sup> does not exist before the work of grace. On grounds of Rom. 7 and 2 Cor. 3 he proves that God's Law, though holy, just and good, can only reveal sin and then kill. This idea is expounded thoroughly in his treatise De spiritu et littera<sup>4</sup> which reveals "an understanding of Paul more profound than any shown by earlier interpreters"<sup>5</sup>.

The main difference between the old and the new Covenants is that in the old Covenant God's law was written on tablets of stone, whereas in the new Covenant it is written on the fleshy tables of the heart<sup>6</sup>. There the commandment (letter that killeth) came from without, imposed

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1) see J. Burnaby, in 'The Library of Christian Classics' Vol.VIII p.  
 2) impeccantia 182 ff.  
 3) free will, free choice 4) The Letter and the Spirit, 412  
 5) Burnaby, op.cit. p. 188 6) Jer. 31; 1 Cor. 3.  
 The quotations from "The Letter and the Spirit" follow the translation by Burnaby.

fear and made man a transgressor. Here the law from within inspires delight and man is made a lover by the Spirit that gives life. By pouring love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit God works in us the willingness as well as the action according to his good pleasure. "By the law of works the Lord says, 'Thou shalt not covet'. By the law of faith the Lord says, 'Without me ye can do nothing', meaning the good works which are the fruit of the vine branches (Joh. 15,5)"<sup>1</sup>.

The old man, because of his sickness, could not keep the law; the commands and the threatenings of the letter did nothing to heal, but now the Spirit heals the new man from his old failings<sup>2</sup>. "It follows that the laws of God, written by God himself upon the heart, are nothing but the very presence of the Holy Spirit who is the finger of God; the presence by which charity, the fullness of the law and the end of the commandment, is shed abroad in our hearts."<sup>3</sup>

Here Augustine sounds absolutely Pauline. But as the Decalogue in his mind has already a firm place as the explanation of what love actually means, he cannot follow Paul in the conclusion that the Law (incl. Decalogue) is superseded by the union with Christ which is determined by the notion of imitation, faith and love. Augustine acknowledges and proves that by the "letter that killeth" can only be meant the Decalogue<sup>4</sup>. But when he speaks about the difference between the "law of works" and the "law of faith"<sup>5</sup> he maintains that the "law of faith" says precisely the same as the "law of works": "I challenge anyone to tell me whether the law of faith does not say 'Thou shalt not covet'." That it does so "is constantly testified aloud by so many evangelic and apostolic precepts". Why then is it not also called a law of works? Where does the difference lie? "To put it in a sentence: what is enjoined with threatening under the law of works, is granted to belief

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1) De spir. et lit. XXV

2) op.cit. XX

3) ib. XXI. This thought is also developed in Serm. 125 and 270 n.3.

4) ib. XIV

5) Rom. 3,27

under the law of faith." According to Augustine the law of faith, as he explains it, is already mentioned in Wisdom 8,21. "So by the law of works God says, 'Do what I command', by the Law of faith we say to God, 'Give what thou commandest'." If the hearer of the command cannot yet perform it, he knows for what he should pray<sup>1</sup>. So it is the Decalogue which shows what the Christian has to do (with the aid of the Spirit). "In these ten commandments, apart from the observance of the Sabbath, I should ask what the Christian is not bound to observe... which among these commands can be said not to bind the Christian?"<sup>2</sup>

A serious obstacle in Augustine's train of thought is found in the passage 1 Tim. 1,8-9. a) "The law is not made for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient." b) "The law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully". Augustine explains these "two seemingly conflicting statements" in the following way:

a) It cannot mean that the unrighteous can ever be justified by keeping the law, because justification is only possible by grace. To use the law lawfully then must signify to use it "as the tutor conducting the lawless to grace, through which alone he can fulfil the law's commands.. When he has been made righteous (by grace) he is to use the law no longer, even as the use of a vehicle ceases at the journey's end, or (in the apostle's own simile already mentioned) the use of a tutor when instruction is completed."

b) But how is it possible to say that the law can be used lawfully by the unrighteous? Who but the righteous knows how to use it lawfully? "If the law is necessary for the righteous also, not to bring him while as yet unrighteous to the grace which justifies, but to be used lawfully by him after his becoming righteous, it is hard to see how the law is not made for the righteous man. We may perhaps answer - indeed we may surely answer - that there is a lawful use of the law by him who is already righteous, which consists in his putting the fear of it

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1) op.cit. XIII

2) op.cit. XIV. In en. Ps. 73 n.2 Augustine explains that the command-

upon the unrighteous. So, when they too have found the plague of inveterate covetousness worsened by the stimulus of prohibition and the multiplying of transgression, they may take refuge by faith with the grace that justifies, and escape the punishment threatened by the letter through being brought by the Spirit's gift to delight in the sweetness of righteousness. In this way there will be no contrariety nor conflict between the two positions, that the righteous also may use lawfully the good law, and yet the law be not made for the righteous."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that Augustine in this interpretation sees only one use of the Law - later called *usus elenchticus*, but here used by the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous - and that he does not speak of the so-called *usus didacticus*, though in a later chapter he holds that the Christian is bound to observe the Decalogue (except the Fourth Commandment)<sup>2</sup>.

In Augustine's treatise Against two letters of the Pelagians we find no thoughts which deviate from his exposition in "The Spirit and the Letter". In the 3d book, ch. 10 he is very positive about the *usus didacticus* of the Law: "Assuredly no one will doubt that the law of God was necessary not alone for that people at that time (Israel), but also is now necessary for us for the right ordering of our life."

The sermones 248-251 which belong also to this period have already been mentioned. The number of fishes (i.e. 153) which were caught by the

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ments are the same in the New Testament, but that the sacraments and promises have changed. Compare also Tract. III in ev. Joh. n. 19-20: "All the commandments (of the Decalogue) are yet more enjoined upon us, and to be observed by us (than by the Jews). In the Decalogue then, there are the same commandments which we also have, but not the same promises." The promise to us is eternal life.

1) op.cit. X.

2) op. cit. XIV, see above.



disciples after Jesus' resurrection signifies those who after their resurrection enter the Kingdom of God, because they have kept the Ten Commandments with the aid of the Spirit, manifested in his sevenfold office. These four sermons are very similar in form and content. First Augustine explains the meaning of the two catches, one before and one after the resurrection of Christ, then he quotes the Ten Commandments and stresses that they cannot be kept (*littera occidit!*) if we are not helped by the Spirit (*Spiritus autem vivificat*). "*Haec decem praecepta nemo implet viribus suis, nisi adjuvetur gratia Dei*"<sup>1</sup>. "*Lex jubet, Spiritus juvat; lex agit tecum, ut scias quid facias; Spiritus ut facias*"<sup>2</sup>. "*Homo sub lege insuper praevaricator tenetur, accedat Spiritus, adjuvet; et fit quod jubetur. Si desit Spiritus, littera occidit te... Isti sunt sancti qui faciunt Legem Dei ex dono Dei*"<sup>3</sup>. In this last sermon Augustine asks again who the adversary is<sup>4</sup> and gives the answer already mentioned: "*Qui est adversarius tuus? Sermo Legis. Quae est via? Vita ista.*" Therefore keep yourself to the Ten and Seven, which grows to 153, then you will belong to those who at the right hand of the Lord will be crowned, not to those who at his left hand will be condemned!

Augustine sees mysterious connexions between the promulgation of the Law at Mount Sinai and Pentecost. Both events took place 50 days after passover<sup>5</sup>. By combining Mat. 12,28 with Luk. 11,20 he concludes that the expression "finger of God" is equivalent to "Spirit of God". If the Decalogue then is said to be written by the finger of God<sup>6</sup>, this means nothing else than by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Spirit has written God's law twice at Pentecost, once on tables of stone at Mount Sinai,

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1) serm. 248

2) serm. 249

3) serm. 251

4) Mt. 4,25

5) The number 50 pointing to the Holy Spirit, i.e. 7 times 7 + 1.  
7 shows the sevenfold operation of the Spirit, 1 his Oneness.

6) Ex. 31,18

the second time into the hearts of the believers at Jerusalem. "Hear thou the tongue speaking, and understand by it the Spirit writing not on stone, but in the heart."<sup>1</sup>

It seems that at times Augustine was not quite satisfied with the negative formulation of the commandments as an expression of the meaning of love. So for instance in en. Ps. 33 II,19: "But what is 'Depart from evil?' It is little that thou injure none, murder none, steal not, commit not adultery, do no wrong, speak no false witness; Depart from evil. When thou hast departed, thou sayest, Now I am safe, I have done all, I shall have life, I shall see good days. Not only saith he 'Depart from evil', but also 'do good'."<sup>2</sup> After giving several examples he sums up: "Concordes simus hic, diligamus proximum quomodo nos." Here Augustine moves from the negative commandments of the Decalogue to the positive commandment of love. But this is rather exceptional.

#### 4. The Decalogue in Augustine's catechetical teaching?

If we consider the important place given to the Decalogue in Augustine's controversy with Manicheans and Pelagians it would not be surprising if this code had played a considerable part in his catechetical teaching. In the time of quadragesima the candidates for baptism received daily instruction<sup>3</sup>. From serm. 250,3 Rentschka infers that they had to learn the Decalogue by heart<sup>4</sup>. In serm. 210,8 and 270,3 Augustine relates the Decalogue particularly to quadragesima: the number 4 points to the 4 seasons of the year and the 4 parts of the world<sup>5</sup> and the number 10 to the Decalogue. "Per haec ergo tempora quadripartita, et per mundum quadripartitum, praedicatur lex Dei, tanquam denarius numerus. Unde et Decalogus primitus commendatur. In decem enim praeceptis lex constituta est: propterea quia videtur in isto denario numero quaedam perfectio."<sup>6</sup>

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1) Serm. 155,4-5

2) Ps. 33,14

3) Serm. 132,1; 57,7; 5,3.

4) Ecce ista Lex est in decem: quid prodest cum didiceris, et non feceris?

5) Luk. 13,29

6) Serm. 270,3

The treatise De fide et operibus shows that Augustine considered the ethical teaching before baptism as very important. Some people had suggested that the teaching concerning the life and morals should not be given before, but after baptism, as the Israelites were given the Law not before, but after their crossing the Red Sea. According to these lay Brethren<sup>1</sup>, the only condition to salvation is faith, and even if some Christians after baptism are not willing to lead a righteous and chaste life, they will be saved as if through fire.

The main point of discussion is whether it is possible to be saved if one is "unwilling to change an evil and shameful life". Augustine denies this assumption categorically, quoting and interpreting many passages from the Gospels and Epistles. He maintains that there is only one kind of legitimate faith, i.e. "faith working through love"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the instruction regarding Christian life and morals has to precede baptism, and only those who are willing to live according to Christian standards are admitted to the sacraments. In the following we shall confine ourselves to the passages which give any elucidation with regard to the preparation of the catechumens and competentes.

Those who are petitioning for the sacraments are called competentes. "What else is the purport of that whole time, during which they hold the place and name of Catechumens, except that they may hear what the faith, and of what kind the life, of a Christian ought to be?"<sup>3</sup> In the days before the Sacrament they are catechized, exorcised, examined. Augustine remembers how intent he was and anxious about "what precepts they, by whom we were catechized, would give us." This learning is done still "much more diligently and urgently on those days on which they are called competentes (quadragesima), when they have already given in their names in order to receive Baptism."

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1) Retract. II.38

2) Gal. 5,6

3) De fide et op. c.9

It is not possible, says Augustine, to separate the two commandments of love from each other, applying the first one only to the competentes, the second one to the baptised members of the Church. "For those two Commandments, being carefully considered, are found to be so connected the one with the other, that neither can the love of God exist in a man if he love not his neighbour, nor the love of his neighbour, if he love not God."<sup>1</sup>

The argument that moral teaching is not necessary before baptism, as Israel was first led through the Red Sea (= baptism) and only afterwards received the Law is refuted by Augustine. "Why therefore to them who are to be baptized do we deliver even the Creed, and demand that it be given back to us? For no such thing was done towards them, whom through the Red Sea the Lord set free from the Egyptians."<sup>2</sup> Actually the departure from Egypt signifies the departure from sin, and even the first table of the Decalogue concerning the worship of the One God was given to them after their "baptism" in the Red Sea.

Though it is evident from this treatise that the teaching in morals is considered as very important, we do not receive the impression that there was a certain system of ethical instruction in general use. The commandment of love has a central place, and though Augustine more than once quotes Jesus' answer to the rich man, the commandments of the Decalogue are not given any preponderance over the exhortations from Gospels and Epistles.

Rentschka considers chapter 17 of the treatise in question as an evidence that the Decalogue formed the subject of catechetical teaching. This inference is not justified, because Augustine here discusses an argument of his adversaries taken from the Old Testament. If we know from other sources that the Decalogue was used occasionally in Augustine's teaching, we are not allowed to argue that in this treatise

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1) op.cit. c. 16

2) op.cit. c.17

he implicitly speaks about the use of the Decalogue in pre-baptismal instruction<sup>1</sup>.

The treatise De catechizandis rudibus (400) is not of great help for our problem, because from it there can be drawn quite opposite conclusions. Augustine in answer to a question from Deogratias of Carthage, gives advice how people who want to become catechumens have to be taught. He gives two examples of a "catechesis of admittance"<sup>2</sup>, both consisting of two parts, narratio and exhortatio. The basis of Christian life are the two commandments of love, and the exhortations are in close parallel to the ethical parts of the New Testament epistles. In n. 35 and 41 Augustine speaks about the Decalogue in connexion with Israel. "This law was given to the Jews in ten commandments, which they call the Decalogue. And these again are reduced to two, namely, that we should love God with our whole heart, and with our whole soul, and with our whole mind; and that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. For that on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets the Lord Himself has both said in the Gospel and made manifest by His own example."<sup>3</sup> In n. 11 he says that the "precepts of a Christian have to be presented briefly and appropriately", and in n. 48 he gives the advice: "tene te ad legem Dei".

Rentschka concludes that Augustine in these two last passages has in mind the Decalogue. He is of the opinion that it was not even necessary to mention the commandments particularly, because

- a) the Ten Commandments were already made known everywhere by the Jews in dispersion,
- b) nearly every pagan had Christian relatives and thus could be expected to know this code,
- c) the Decalogue was sung by mendicants at Church doors<sup>4</sup>

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1) For this question see Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 189-194.

2) not to be confounded with the instruction of the competentes as preparation for baptism!

3) de cat. rud. c. 41

4) serm. 32,24

- d) the law of the state was to some extent based on commandments of the Decalogue.

This conclusion is however not convincing. The way in which Augustine in the passages quoted speaks about the Decalogue does not suggest that this code was generally known among pagans. Besides, the incompatibility with Christianity of the sins and crafts mentioned in n. 11 and 47 would be demonstrated better by texts from the epistles than by the commandments of the Decalogue.

### 5. The Decalogue and natural Law.

On several occasions Augustine speaks about the natural law in relation to the Law of Israel. In en. Ps. 57,1 he asks how an unjust man can speak justice. According to Augustine this is not difficult, because God has written in the human heart the truth<sup>1</sup>: that which thyself thou wouldest not have done, do not thou to another. So even before the Law was given, no one was ignorant as to how to act justly. But though this law was written in their hearts, they did not want to read it. Because man sought the things which are outside, he became exiled from himself, was a deserter from his heart. Through the written law God seizes man on his way and brings him back to the law written in his heart<sup>2</sup>. This is according to Augustine the meaning of Is. 46,8<sup>3</sup>:

"Return ye transgressors to the heart." As examples, Augustine mentions several wrongs we are not willing to suffer and then asks: "Come, if thou art not willing to suffer these things, art thou by any means the only man? Dost thou not live in the fellowship of mankind? He that together with thee hath been made, is thy fellow; and all men have been made after the image of God, unless with earthly covetings they efface that which He hath formed." "Quod ergo tibi non vis fieri, noli alteri facere. Judicas enim malum esse in eo quod pati non vis; et hoc te cogit nosse lex intime, in ipso tuo corde conscripta."

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- 1) manu formatoris nostri in ipsis cordibus nostri veritas scripsit...
  - 2) Data est conscripta lex: non quia in cordibus scripta non erat; sed quia tu fugitivus eras cordis tui.
  - 3) according to the Septuagint.



In en. Ps. 118 serm. n.4-5 Augustine speaks about Rom. 2,14 and develops the same thought mentioned above. The natural law (*lex naturalis*) is already present within Israel before the event at Mount Sinai, but is renewed, enlarged and confirmed by the divine (written) Law, so that they are made still greater transgressors<sup>1</sup>. So the law, whether given in paradise, whether implanted by nature<sup>2</sup> or whether promulgated in letter, causes all the sinners of the earth to become transgressors<sup>3</sup>. The similar doctrine is developed in Ep. 157,15: *lex naturaliter in corde conscripta*.

Speaking of Job<sup>4</sup> Augustine explains that though the Law on tables was not yet given to the Jews in his time, but in the hearts of the godly there remained still the eternal law from which that which was given to the people was copied<sup>5</sup>.

In Contra Faust. l. XXII n.27 Augustine gives a definition of sin: "Sin is any transgression in deed, or word, or desire, of the eternal law. And the eternal law is the divine order or will of God<sup>6</sup> which requires the preservation of natural order, and forbids the breach of it... Nos... per inhabitantem Spiritum eius in nobis... pro modulo infirmitatis nostrae secundum aeternam legem quae naturalis ordo servatur, iuste vivimus, si vivamus ex fide non ficta, quae per dilectionem operatur."

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- 1) Multo magis ergo praevaricatores facti sunt lege divina, qua naturalis illa sive instaurata, sive aucta, sive firmata est.
  - 2) naturaliter insita
  - 3) praevaricatores fecit omnes peccatores terrae
  - 4) serm. 81,2
  - 5) manebat adhuc lex aeterna in cordibus piorum, unde illa descripta est quae populo data est.
  - 6) ratio divina vel voluntas Dei

## 6. Summary and conclusion.

In his discussion with the Manichean heresy Augustine had to defend the Old Testament against his adversaries. Among the commandments of the Old Testament, according to Augustine, only the ceremonial law is abrogated by Jesus Christ (through his fulfilling it) whereas the moral law is still binding for Christians. If the commandments are called "holy, just and good"<sup>1</sup>, if all the commandments are summed up in the commandment of love<sup>2</sup>, and if the whole Law and the Prophets hang on the two great commandments<sup>3</sup>, then, Augustine concludes, the Christian has to observe the commandments of the Decalogue (except the precept of Sabbath observance) which are equivalent to the commandment of love. As a matter of fact these precepts are already ingrafted in the human heart, but the revelation of this Law was renewed at Mount Sinai and its commandments were enjoined again by Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit the Christian lives according to this eternal law.

The difference between Old and New Testament lies not in the commandments as such, but in man's relation to them and in his capability to keep them. The Jew was under the Law, frightened by it, unable to keep the commandments, and therefore experiencing it as a letter that kills. The Christian is no longer under the Law, but under grace. The Law of Moses now becomes grace and truth through Jesus Christ. Fear is replaced by love, the Holy Spirit enables man to keep the commandments.

The notion of love plays a significant part in Augustine's expositions. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit love is shed abroad in our hearts and love means the fullness of the Law and the end of the commandment. Through the Spirit God himself gives what he commands. All the commandments are summed up in the commandment of love, therefore the Decalogue tells the Christian what he has to do in order to manifest

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1) Rom. 7,12  
3) Mt. 22,40

2) Rom. 13,8-10

this love. The Decalogue accompanies the Christian in his life like an adversary<sup>1</sup> and it is therefore our task to make friends with this accuser, otherwise we are bound to enter prison (hell). In the kingdom of God will be found those who have kept the commandments of the Decalogue with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

To what extent does Augustine differ from Paul in this respect? As has already been mentioned he shows an understanding of Paul which exceeds that of the previous Fathers. But on the other hand there are some deviations which at first sight might not seem serious, but which actually became fatal for the approach in ethics and for the catechetical teaching in later times.

For Paul, Christ has not only wrought our justification but he is also made our sanctification and our wisdom<sup>2</sup>. Our union with him is the basis for the new life (sanctification) and for our knowledge of him (wisdom), which includes the knowledge of how we have to live and to act. It is surprising how little attention Augustine pays to this fact. He makes love central as Paul does. But if we ask Paul what he means by love then we find that the knowledge of what love is comes from our union with Christ and our imitating him. It is our metamorphosis through baptism (union with his death and resurrection<sup>3</sup>) which causes us to be metamorphosed by the renewal of our mind<sup>4</sup> and thus enables us to prove what is the will of God.

If we ask Augustine what it means to love, then he points to the Decalogue. As a matter of fact we have put the question too bluntly by this statement. Augustine has too rich a mind, lives too intensely in the New Testament and stands too close to Paul to confine his ethical teaching to this narrow foundation. Quantitatively his exhortations are based far more on the Gospels and the Epistles than on the Decalogue.

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1) Mt. 5,25

3) Rom. 6-8

2) 1 Cor. 1,30

4) Rom. 12,2

But in principle he can reduce Christian ethics to the commandment of love with the Decalogue as its interpretation. Though Augustine constantly refers to the Gospels and the Epistles, the accents are moved. It is not in the first place Christ who both teaches how to live and enables us to do God's will, but it is the Decalogue which reveals God's will and the Spirit who helps us to keep the commandments. The number 153<sup>1</sup> always points to the Ten Commandments and the Spirit. Christ is put in brackets. He had given the Decalogue at Mount Sinai and enjoined the commandments at his coming, but the Decalogue is actually only a copy of the natural (eternal) law engrafted in man's heart. So man possesses the knowledge of God's demand and is not dependent on Jesus Christ for the discernment of God's will.

With relation to the fulfilment of the commandments man is not pointed to Christ, but to the Spirit. As long as the Spirit is consistently understood as the Spirit of Christ there may be little danger in it. But if the Spirit in our thinking loses this relationship and becomes either some supernatural principle or is identified with the human spirit, then we stand alone with the Decalogue in our ethics. Augustine himself is far from reaching that position, but he alters the course in such a way that this development becomes possible.

Faustus seems to have understood Paul when he says that in our union with Christ in baptism we have died to the Law. But he draws a wrong conclusion with regard to the quality of the Law and the giver of the Law. Augustine, in reaction to the Manicheans, maintains that as the Law was given by the Father of Jesus Christ, and as it is holy, just and good, it has not lost its validity for the Christians. Both these conclusions are at variance with Paul's teaching<sup>2</sup>. Faustus, on grounds of Paul's statement that the Law is not authoritative for the

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1) According to Augustine the symbol of God's people in the consummation.

2) see § 9

Christians, depreciates the Law as well as its author. Augustine from the fact that God has given the holy, just and good Law infers that its validity cannot be temporally limited.

Consequently Augustine mitigates the passages where Paul demonstrates the contrast between old and new Covenants, Law and Grace, Letter and Spirit. If Paul says "you died to the Law", Augustine interprets: to the Law coming from outside, the law without grace. The antithesis for Augustine is not Letter-Spirit as for Paul, but Letter without Spirit on one side, and Letter with Spirit on the other. The fact that Augustine is not always consistent in this respect shows that the evidence of the biblical text was sometimes stronger than his theological system<sup>1</sup>.

We have already touched on Augustine's momentous equation: Commandment of love = Ten Commandments. Paul had said that all the commandments are summed up in the commandment of love, but he never reversed this sentence, not even for practical purposes, whereas Augustine infers: if all the commandments (of the Old Testament) are contained in the commandment of love, then we are allowed (or obliged?) to turn to the Old Testament commandments, especially to the Decalogue in order to find out what love towards God and the neighbour implies. This inference would have been impossible for Paul for theological reasons, and therefore he did not use the Decalogue as a basis for his ethical teaching. Augustine however considered the Ten Commandments a fitting means for his ethical instruction.

What place was given to the Decalogue in Augustine's catechetical teaching? This question is difficult to answer. Rentschka is convinced that Augustine introduced the Decalogue-catechesis, but we have already doubted several of his conclusions. Eggersdorfer<sup>2</sup> disagrees with

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1) compare De spiritu et littera X and XXI

2) Franz Xaver Eggersdorfer, Der Heilige Augustinus als Pädagoge, Freiburg i.B. 1907, p. 164 ff.

Rentschka on this score<sup>1</sup> - though he acknowledges the extraordinary estimation of the Decalogue by Augustine - for the following reasons: If Augustine had put the Decalogue in one line with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer

- 1) he would have chosen the form of 'traditio' and 'redditio' as he did with the other pieces,
- 2) he would have provided a fixed text of the Ten Commandments
- 3) he would have mentioned the Decalogue in relation to love in his Enchiridion in 421, which was a sort of text book of catechetical teaching.

Moreover Eggersdorfer denies that the sermons 248 - 251 may be called Decalogue-catecheses. The text of Joh. 21 (*de duabus piscationibus*) was the pericope for Easter-week even before Augustine had discovered the relation of the 153 fishes with the Ten Commandments. Therefore it was not the Decalogue, but the story of the draught which formed the subject matter of this sermon<sup>2</sup>. Concerning the Sermons 9, 33, 109 and 8, Eggersdorfer contends that these were ordinary sermons and not addresses to neophytes<sup>3</sup>.

To his we may add that we are not allowed to take our conjectures as facts, inferring that Augustine has the Decalogue in mind wherever he speaks about commandments, precepts, law, and moral teaching. We have already mentioned that we cannot follow Rentschka in his conclusions with regard to the treatises 'De catechizandis rudibus' and 'De fide et operibus'.

It is Rentschka's merit to have proved that Augustine made an unprecedented use of the Decalogue in his theological thinking as well as in

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- 1) "Ungerechtfertigt ist es, eigentliche Dekalogkatechesen des Heiligen aufzuzeigen, und noch mehr, diese in eine Linie mit seinen Symbol- und Paternosterreden zu stellen." op.cit. p. 164-165.
  - 2) "Tatsächlich zeigt Augustin durch nichts, dass er mit Rücksicht auf die Neophyten den Dekalog bespreche." p.167
  - 3) "So müssen wir also trotz der fleissigen Arbeit Rentschkas daran festhalten, dass Augustin keine feierlichen Dekalogkatechesen ge-



his teaching. Statements as that of Zezschwitz that Augustine depreciated the Decalogue<sup>1</sup> cannot be upheld in face of the facts. Likewise, Surkau's assertion "Gerade bei Augustin fehlt jeder Nachweis dafür, dass der Dekalog zum Katechismus gehört"<sup>2</sup> asks for some modification. On the other hand it seems that several of Rentschka's conclusions are more influenced by his wish to introduce Augustine as the "father of the Decalogue-catechesis" than by an objective evaluation of his findings. Nevertheless it does credit to his scholarly honesty that he regulates his rather too far-reaching statements by more moderate formulations. The result is however that we are faced with somehow contradictory information<sup>3</sup>. A detailed argument with Rentschka would ask for a more thorough investigation of Augustine's writings than has been possible in this chapter.

halten habe. Mag er in der Predigt und im sonstigen Unterricht dem Dekalog einen grösseren Wert beigemessen haben, als man vor ihm zu tun pflegte, so denkt er doch nicht daran, denselben neben Symbolum und Paternoster als drittes Lehrstück in den Katechumenenunterricht einzuführen." op.cit. p. 168.

- 1) Zezschwitz, Der Katechismus oder der kirchlich-katechetische Unterricht nach seinem Stoffe, 1872<sup>2</sup>.
- 2) RGG<sup>3</sup> III p. 1182
- 3) Compare the following sentences:  
 "Augustin hat zuerst die Dekalog-Katechese eingeführt, dann erst den Dekalog zum Zentrum, zur Norm des Unterrichts in den Sitten erhoben. Nun verfährt er wie beim Symbol- und Paternosterunterricht. Der Dekalog-Unterricht geht voraus und wird in der Infanzzeit gekrönt durch eine feierliche Dekalogkatechese." Rentschka, op.cit. p.102  
 "Gewiss ist nicht an einen Dekalog-Unterricht in unserem Sinne zu denken. Augustin hat nach seinen sonstigen Aeusserungen die Sitte beibehalten, bestimmte Abschnitte aus der Heiligen Schrift den Kompetenten vorzulesen und daran Fragen, Ermahnung, Belehrung verschiedenster Art anzuschliessen." op.cit. p. 121  
 "Die genaue Gestaltung des Kompetentenunterrichtes lässt sich nicht feststellen, weil uns gerade vom zwangslosen Unterrichte nichts erhalten ist." op.cit. p. 126

## § 14. Decay of catechetical instruction<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Introduction.

In this paragraph we are concerned with the time between the 5th and 13th centuries. It cannot be our task, however, to depict the development of catechetical instruction in general during that time. We only want to know whether the Decalogue was ever used in this instruction, and with this purpose in mind we are going to make some spot-checks for certain situations where the Decalogue would have appeared if it had formed part of the catechetical instruction. Our attention has to be directed to two different fields:

- a) the older Churches where infant baptism became predominant and therefore the teaching had to follow baptism
- b) the "mission fields" where adult-baptism still was in practice and thus pre-baptismal instruction might be expected.

Neither in the older Churches, nor on the "mission fields" - as far as we can make out - was there any instruction similar to that of the great age of catechesis. This leads us to speak of decay in catechetical

### 1) Literature for § 14 and 15:

- Cohrs Ferdinand, Die evangelischen Katechismusversuche vor Luthers Enchiridion, Bd. 4: Undatierbare Katechismusversuche und Zusammenfassende Darstellung, MGP Bd. XXIII, Berlin 1902
- Meyer Joh., Luthers Kleiner Katechismus, Gütersloh 1929, esp.p. 72 ff.
- Holtzmann H., Die Katechese des Mittelalters, ZpTh XX 1898 p.1-18 and 117-130
- Göbl Peter, Geschichte der Katechese im Abendlande vom Zerfall des Katechumenats bis zum Ende des Mittelalters, Kempten 1880
- Probst F., Geschichte der Katholischen Katechese, Breslau 1886
- do. Katechese und Predigt vom Anfang des 4. bis zum Ende des 6. Jahrhunderts, Breslau 1884
- Sachsse E., Die Lehre von der kirchlichen Erziehung, Berlin 1897
- Sloyan G.S., Shaping the Christian Message, New York 1959
- Jungmann J.A., Katechetik, Freiburg 1955<sup>2</sup>
- Zeischwitz Gerh. v., System der christlich kirchlichen Katechetik, Bd. 2: Der Katechismus oder der kirchliche Unterricht nach seinem Stoffe, Leipzig 1872<sup>2</sup>
- Geffcken Joh., Der Bilderkatechismus des 15. Jahrhunderts, Leipzig 1855

teaching<sup>1</sup>. There were of course efforts to maintain the traditional instruction, albeit in rudimentary form: at least the Creed and the Lord's prayer had to be taught to every Christian.

Though the Decalogue did not appear in the realm of catechetical instruction until the 13th century, nevertheless this code was not neglected in medieval theology, since the Ten Commandments were considered the equivalent of natural law. We shall however not deal here with the different attitudes to the Decalogue in medieval thinking. It will suffice to summarize the doctrine about the Ten Commandments immediately before their appearance in practical theology<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Catechetical instruction in the older Churches.

### a) The instruction of baptized children.

The increase of infant baptism in the 5th century brought about a fundamental change in the institution of the catechumenate. As long as adult baptism was predominant, this sacrament was preceded by thorough instruction of the candidates. They were led through the Holy Scriptures and taught the Creed and the Lord's Prayer which they had to "give back" at a certain moment in Lent. Moreover exorcisms played an important part during this time. With infant baptism exorcism as well as the chrism still were applied, but the teaching naturally fell away. The core of the addresses which were given formerly in connexion with the tradition of the Creed was put in fixed forms and read as prologue or epilogue. In this way the "orders of scrutiny" came into existence.<sup>3</sup> The oldest orders are found in the Gelasian Sacramentary. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer are handed over and given back in Latin and Greek language. A further evidence of this development is the seventh Roman Ordo<sup>4</sup> which according to Probst<sup>5</sup> was composed before the time of Gregory.

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1) cf. J.A. Jungmann, op.cit. p. 9: "Vom 6. Jahrhundert an beginnt der Verfall des Katechumenats, da die Erwachsenentaufe in der römisch-griechischen Welt, die nun christlich ist, kaum mehr vorkommt."

2) § 15.1

3) see F. Probst, Geschichte der Kathol. Katechese, p. 48 ff

4) printed in F. Probst, Katechese und Predigt... p. 126-134

5) Probst, Geschichte... p. 50

Gregory I revised the liturgy of baptism, removing the parts which had no meaning for infant baptism, and compiling the prayers and exorcisms in the "ordo baptismi" which forms part of the "Rituale Romanum". We need not investigate here the development outside Rome.<sup>1</sup>

The Creed and the Lord's Prayer were delivered to the parents or godparents who accepted the obligation to teach the children these two catechetical pieces later. Until the 8th century it was the custom to learn and recite the Creed and the Lord's prayer in Greek or Latin, because it was supposed that God understood only the holy languages Hebrew, Greek and Latin<sup>2</sup>. It is not surprising, therefore, that in popular belief these forms were often considered magic charms.

The Synod of Frankfurt (794) ordered that "the catholic Faith in the Trinity, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed is to be proclaimed and transmitted to everybody". In the "Exhortatio ad plebem christianam" (8th century) we read: "Omnis, qui Christianus esse voluerit, hanc fidem et orationem Dominicam omni festinatione studeat discere, et eos, quos de fonte exceperit, edocere, ne ante tribunal Christi cogatur rationem exsolvere."<sup>3</sup> Charlemagne stated that a child, because it was baptized was to be considered as a catechumen. At Easter 801 the emperor, who attended a ceremony of baptism, had the godparents examined and ordered that either those of the godparents who did not know the catechetical subjects be replaced by others, or that baptism be postponed until Pentecost. In a letter to Bishop Garibald of Lüttich, Charlemagne, referring to this event, exhorts him and his priests not to neglect the work of the Lord<sup>4</sup>. A Capitulare of the emperor states

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- 1) In the Roman rite of to-day we can still discern clear borrowings from the ancient preparation for baptism:
    - a) from the catechesis of admission: breathing, sign of the cross and exorcised salt
    - b) from the time of the catechumenate: exorcism with repetition of the sign of the cross and oration
    - c) from the preparation of the candidates: tradition and repetition of Creed and Lord's Prayer, renunciation, last exorcism.
 (see Jungmann, op.cit. p.10)
  - 2) Holtzmann, op.cit. p.4
  - 3) Cohrs, op.cit. p. 230
  - 4) Sachsse, op.cit. p. 152

that those who do not know the two principal pieces of the catechism shall either be beaten or will have to refrain from any sort of drink except water<sup>1</sup>. A Capitulare of 802 obliges the priests to know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the vernacular and to teach them to the people<sup>2</sup>.

The Synod of Mainz (813) ordained that all Christians have to be urged by the priest - if necessary by fasting and chastisement - to learn the two catechetical pieces. Whoever was not able to learn them by heart in Latin was allowed to do so in the vernacular, but this seems still to be an exception. The Synod of Paris (829) compares the former practice of the catechumenate preceding baptism with the changed situation caused by infant baptism and stresses the importance of the instruction of children. Godparents are to be instructed properly so that they are able to fulfil their task. Similar instructions are given by the Synods of Arles (813), of Attigny (820), Rome (826),

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1) Sachsse, op.cit. p. 153-154.

2) The addresses given to the people by the inspectors and the representatives of the sovereign show a striking affinity to the New Testament exhortations:

"Listen, Beloved, Brethren, to the warning, which our Master the Emperor Charles addresses to you by our lips. We are sent here for the sake of your salvation, and we are instructed to warn you to live virtuously in accordance with God's law and justly in accordance with the law of this world. We bid you to know in the first place that you must believe in One God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Love God with all your heart. Love your neighbour as yourselves, give alms to the poor in accordance with your means. Receive travellers in your homes, visit the sick, show mercy to those in prison. Let women be submissive to their husbands. Let husbands never address insulting words to their wives. Let sons respect their parents and, on reaching marriageable age, take wives in lawful wedlock unless they prefer to consecrate their lives to God. Let clerics obey their Bishops, let monks faithfully observe their Rule. Let dukes, counts and other public functionaries do justice to the people and be merciful to the poor: let money not entice them from honest dealing. Nothing is hidden from God. Life is short, and the hour of death uncertain. Be always ready."

(Quoted from J. Leclercq, *The Two Sovereignities*, London 1952, p. 55f)



Martua (827), Langres (859). Likewise, a Capitulare of Ludwig II (856) orders "ut oratio dominica, in qua omnia necessaria humanae vitae comprehenduntur, et symbolum apostolicum, in quo fides catholica ex integro comprehenditur, ab omnibus discatur tam latine, quam barbarice, ut quod ore profitetur corde credatur et intelligatur."<sup>1</sup>

More and more the godparents appear as the main teachers, and it is understandable that only those who could recite these two pieces were admitted by the Church for this office<sup>2</sup>. In 858 Bishop Herard of Tours demanded that every Church member should be able to sing the Gloria, Sanctus and Kyrie, but only the godparents were obliged to know the two forms of catechetical instruction. In the later Middle Ages the Ave Maria became very popular, especially through the propaganda of the mendicant friars, and eventually the Angelic Salutation was considered a new catechetical piece besides the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

This practice of instruction was exactly the same in the 13th century, as is evident from the advice of the famous preacher Berthold of Regensburg who thinks it excellent if the children beside the Creed and the Lord's prayer learn also the Angelic Salutation: "Da soltu von kintlicher iugent den glouben cristenliches lebens gar und gar wol bevesten und besteten in dinem herzen. Du solt in uzen lernen zu diutsche: die ungelerten liute, die sultu den glouben in tiutsche lernen und die gelerten in buochischem (latin). Ez solten des kindes toten den glouben und daz pater noster lern, so ez siben jar alt wurde, wan sie sint's im schuldig, wan sie sin geistliche vater oder muoter. Sie sollent sprechen ze sinem vater oder muoter: Gevater, ir sult mir minen toten daz pater noster und den glouben lern, oder ir lat in zuo mir gen, so lere ich ez. Kunnent sie das ave maria darzuo, daz ist vil wunderguot.

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1) Holzmann, op.cit. p. 5

2) Occasionally it was decided that the priests should teach the Creed and the formula of renunciation to the children - so by the Synod of Cloveshove (747) and by King Edgar (967) - but these were exceptions. (see Sachsse, op.cit. p. 153).



Ist aber, daz daz kint sin tote nit lert, so soltu ez selber lern; wan welich mensche vierzehen jar alt wirt und kan ez daz pater noster nicht, man sol ez an ein velt (?) legen."<sup>1</sup>

According to this advice, the child is to be taught the Creed and the Lord's Prayer at the age of seven, either by his parents, his godparents, or, if they fail, by the priest. According to some authorities, at this age the child is to go to confession for the first time. Others are vaguer in the fixing of the age and state, that children must go to confession as soon as they are able to discern between good and evil.<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with this development the meaning of the term "catechesis" (catechizare) underwent a considerable change. This term was no longer used for the catechetical teaching during several weeks, but was confined to the liturgical acts preceding baptism, especially those parts which concerned the godparents (reception of Creed and Lord's Prayer, vicarious answer to the priest's question concerning renunciation). Finally, in the later Middle Ages, only the answering of the questions put by the priest is called "catechesis". The term "catechism" could even be used as synonym to "godparenthood"<sup>3</sup>.

By the institution of auricular confession which has been practised since the 6th century and was made compulsory in 1215 (4th Lateran Council) the Church possessed a means to check whether the godparents had fulfilled their duty in teaching their godchild. The penitent first had to recite the formula of renunciation, then the Pater noster and the Creed to which eventually was added the Ave Maria.

In the time of Charlemagne an attempt was made to teach the children in schools<sup>4</sup>. The Council of Mainz (813) decided that the parents should send their children to school so that they might learn the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. There are several ordinances of bishops

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1) Geffcken, op.cit. p. 23

3) ib. p. 18

2) ib. p. 24-25

4) Sachsse, op.cit. p. 156 ff.

of that time concerning this matter, but there is no evidence as to how far these plans were realized. J.A. Jungmann<sup>1</sup> warns against an over-estimation of the school practice in the Middle Ages. Only from the time of the Crusades onward were schools established in greater number, because the developing commerce and industry made it necessary that more people should be able to read and write. In the 13th and 14th centuries it was the towns especially which established first the so-called latin-schools, and later schools using the vernacular, sometimes under strong opposition on the part of the bishops and the existing monastic schools. The main subjects taught at these schools were reading, writing, arithmetic and the singing of church hymns. For the practice of reading among other things were used the parts of the "catechism". It is not likely, however, that the schools provided specific religious instruction.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the children made acquaintance with the "catechism" either at school or in church where the main parts were recited by the priest. Against this background we can understand the statement of Matthesius that in his youth under the papacy he had already learnt the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and that these subjects were taught at school, but that they were never explained to him.<sup>3</sup>

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1) Sloyan, op.cit. p. 39

2) "Dass in Sonderheit in den deutschen Schreib- und Lese-Schulen religiöse Stoffe in deutscher Sprache selbständig behandelt worden seien... sind unbewiesene Behauptungen." Johannes Müller, Quellen-schriften und Geschichte des deutschsprachlichen Unterrichts bis zur Mitte des 16. Jh., Gotha 1882, p. 331. Müller refers to a manuscript of the second half of the 15th century containing the subjects dealt with by a teacher of that time. Among texts of quite divergent character there are also the Ten Commandments in poetic form. See Müller, op.cit. p. 329, esp. note 76.

3) Predigten über Luthers Lehre und Leben, Wittenberg 1588, p. 59, quoted from Sachsse, op.cit. p. 161.

b) Educational aids for the priests.

If the priests had to teach the members of the congregation it was of course essential that they themselves should know the elements of the Christian faith. Charlemagne ordered that a priest before taking office must be examined as to whether he knew and understood the Apostles' and the Athanasian Creeds, the Lord's Prayer, the canon of the mass, the different parts of the mass, the exorcisms, the forms of confession, the prayers for the dead etc. No mention is made of the Decalogue. Similar orders of examination are edited by the bishops of the 9th century. It seems, however, that these were ideals which could seldom be realized at that time.<sup>1</sup>

In order to enable the priests to fulfil their duty, several treatises were edited in the 9th century. In 802 there appeared the Freising interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the German language. About the same time we find the so-called Weissenburg Catechism, containing

1) The Lord's Prayer with a short explanation in German, 2) the enumeration of the deadly sins, following Gal. 5,19-21 in Latin and German, 3) the Apostles' Creed in German and Latin, 4) the Athanasian Creed in German and Latin, 5) the great Gloria in German and Latin. The catechism of Notker contains the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed in Latin with a German translation and short explanation of the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer in Latin. These "catechisms" were written for the priests who had to teach the people in the vernacular and form the starting point for the catechetical literature in the following centuries.

c) The reading and interpretation of the catechetical subjects in the worship.

From the 8th century on we have many evidences that the synods and archbishops ordered the bishops and priests to preach to the people in the

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1) see E. Sachsse, op.cit. p. 136: "Die Mehrzahl der Pfarrer im Mittelalter verstand wenig Latein und konnte nur dürftig lesen."

vernacular<sup>1</sup>. It seems that the main subjects for these sermons were provided by the articles of the Creed. Heaven and hell, merits and punishment were popular themes too, and, for the warning of the hearers, catalogues of sins played a considerable part. Hinkman of Reims (9th century) tells the priests to learn the Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart and to preach them to the congregation. It is very likely, however, that most of the sermons were reproductions of homilies of the Fathers<sup>2</sup>. From the 12th century on the sermons, especially developed by Franciscans and Dominicans, grew more original but - with a few exceptions - not more evangelical. The stress lay on repentance, and this particular outlook was certainly favourable for the entry of the Decalogue into preaching. Already in the 8th century it was customary to read the Creed and the Lord's Prayer to the congregation who gathered for worship<sup>3</sup>.

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1) References in Sachsse, op.cit. p. 162 ff.

2) "Wenn überhaupt gepredigt wurde, so war die Predigt das Hersagen einer alten Homilie oder eines Bruchstücks daraus in deutscher Sprache. Deshalb wurde den Presbytern dringend empfohlen, sich eine Sammlung alter Homilien anzuschaffen." Sachsse, op.cit. p. 165. cf. Alfr. Niebergall, Die Geschichte der christlichen Predigt, in *Leiturgia II*, esp. p. 238 ff.

3) E. Weismann ("Der Predigtgottesdienst und die verwandten Formen" in *Leiturgia III* p.18) suggests that the ethical teaching at that time was based on the Decalogue: "Daneben (besides Creed and the Lord's Prayer) trat die Unterweisung in den sittlichen Grundsätzen des Christentums, wobei wohl die Zehn Gebote als Ausgangspunkt gedient haben dürften." Weismann acknowledges that we have no evidence of this practice, but is of the opinion that we may infer this from the later usage: "Eine ausdrückliche Erwähnung des Dekalogs fanden wir bisher in der karolingischen Zeit nicht. Doch darf man sowohl von der Sache wie von der späteren Praxis her vermuten, dass schon damals die 10 Gebote bei der gottesdienstlichen Unterweisung eine Rolle spielten." (p. 18 n.61). This is indeed a queer manner to attain a desired conclusion, projecting the practice of the 13th century back into the 9th!

### 3. Catechetical instruction of pagans.

In the missionary endeavour of the medieval Church the principle remained that the pagans had to be instructed in the Christian faith before baptism. As a matter of fact we do not know how this catechetical teaching was shaped in particular, because no catechetical sermon or even design has survived.<sup>1</sup> From contemporary literature Bareille<sup>2</sup> tries to discover the main lines of the catechesis and mentions the following points: Condemnation of idol worship in all its forms; proclamation of the one God, creator of heaven and earth, who has sent his Son in order to save man; God's dealings with the world and his plan of redemption; significance of baptism; renunciation and adhesion; lists of vices and virtues; last Judgement; heaven and hell. The Didache and Augustine's 'De Catechizandis Rudibus' seem to have been the main models for the catechetical instruction of that time.

It appears, however, that this teaching very often was rather superficial and sometimes entirely neglected. German tribes frequently entered Christianity as a body. The Burgundians of the right side of the Rhine in 430 received instruction during 7 days<sup>3</sup>, but the Franks, (numbering between 3000 and 6000 souls), in 597 just followed their king Chlodwig into baptism. Augustine who set foot on England in the spring of 597, at Christmas of the same year already baptized 10'000 Angles.<sup>4</sup> In the instruction of Gregory I to his successful missionary we find no allusion to catechetical teaching.

Bishop Daniel of Winchester in his advice to Bonifatius requested that the converted pagans had to know at least the Creed, the confession and

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1) "Malheureusement il ne nous est resté aucune catéchèse de cette époque, sans doute parce que, prêchant en langue vulgaire, les missionnaires d'alors ne prirent pas soin de rédiger en latin les discours qu'ils adressaient aux païens et aux catéchumènes. Nous en sommes donc réduits aux conjectures." G. Bareille in Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique, Paris II col. 1891

2) op.cit. col. 1891-2.

3) Socr. H.E. 7,30

4) see G.J.Th. Lau, Gregor I der Grosse, Leipzig 1845 p. 216.

the Lord's Prayer. But it seems that the practice of this missionary was less scrupulous. Renunciation of pagan rites and promise to submit to Christian habits was usually enough for acceptance into the Church. When whole tribes were christianized by the sword of mighty rulers (e.g. the Nordschwaben by Karlmann, the Saxons by Charlemagne, the Bulgars by king Bogoris, the Moravians by the Duke of Rastislav) there was of course no question of prebaptismal instruction. The scanty teaching of Widekind and Abbio (785) was an exception.

Alcuin, the theologian at the court of Charlemagne, protested against this practice of christianizing<sup>1</sup>. Referring to Matth. 28,19 f and Mc. 16,16, to Hieronymus' comm. in Matth. and Augustine's 'De catechizandis Rudibus', he demanded a definite order of baptism, i.e. the candidates for baptism must be instructed before they were accepted in the Church. Within 40 days before Easter or Pentecost they should be taught during 2-3 weeks, and in the week before baptism lessons must be given every day. The Apostles' Creed and the formula of renunciation appear as main subjects of catechesis.

Wherever the Church was established firmly, infant baptism became predominant. A synod in England about 691 decided that the children of Christian parents must be baptized within 30 days, else the parents would be fined 30 solidi. Under Edgar it was decided that children had to be baptized within 37 days, in Northumberland baptism had to be applied within 9 days after birth. The same development took place everywhere so that in the later Middle Ages infant baptism became the rule and instruction followed baptism as described in the previous section.

#### 4. Conclusion.

From the previous outline it has become plain that concerning the Middle Ages we cannot speak about catechetical teaching in the proper

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- 1) see H. V. Schubert, Geschichte der christlichen Kirche im Frühmittelalter, p. 646 ff; Sachsse, op.cit. p. 142 ff.
  - 2) Sachsse, op.cit. p. 146



sense<sup>1</sup>. The Church transferred the duty of teaching the children to the parents and particularly to godparents, and this instruction was practically limited to the knowledge by heart of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Up to the 12th century the Decalogue is not mentioned at all in connexion with catechetical teaching.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1) This fact has been disputed occasionally, especially by Roman Catholic writers. See e.g. Peter Göbl, *Geschichte der Katechese im Abendlande vom Zerfalle des Katechumenats bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Kempten 1880, who thinks it possible to disagree with Zezschwitz and Steinmeyer on this score. But recently Roman Catholic theologians have showed more objectivity in this matter. L. Bopp in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. VI col. 28, states plainly "Eine eigentliche und regelmässige Kinder-Katechese findet sich im MA nicht; Eltern und Paten blieben weiterhin für die religiöse Unterweisung der Kinder verantwortlich, die in erster Linie in Form der Haus-Katechese geschah. Die Erwachsenen-Katechese selbst gab es nicht mehr im Sinn des christlichen Altertums."

Josef A. Jungmann, *Religious Education in Late Medieval Times* (in G.S. Sloyan, *Shaping the Christian Message*, p.39) declares: "Historical accuracy forces us to maintain that there was no such thing as a widespread study of catechism under ecclesiastical auspices."

- 2) Here too, Göbl's conclusion is rather biased and certainly unsupported. He points to the fact that the text of the Decalogue was contained in Church- and Civil Law, established by Alfred the Great, where the Ten Commandments appear in the preface. From this fact Göbl infers: "Mithin dürfte auch die Ansicht, dass der Dekalog, wie immer so auch im früheren Mittelalter eine ehrenvolle Stellung unter den katechetischen Lehrstücken eingenommen habe, Zezschwitz gegenüber aufrecht erhalten und bekräftigt bleiben. Es ist keineswegs notwendig, dass die 10 Gebote, um ein Katechismusstück zu sein, überall aufgezählt und wortgetreu übersetzt werden. Die 10 Gebote Gottes fanden in der Katechese Verwendung, wenn auch nicht immer alle zugleich, sondern je nach Gelegenheit und Bedürfnis nur einzelne erklärt und eingeschränkt wurden und wenn auch das Volk, wie schon erwähnt, nicht streng verpflichtet war, den Dekalog gleich dem Vaterunser und dem apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis auswendig zu wissen und hersagen zu können." (op.cit. p. 178/9).

Similar unfounded assertions are found in J. Mayer, *Geschichte des Katechumenats und der Katechese in den ersten sechs Jahrhunderten*, e.g. p. 287. J.A. Jungmann (*Katechetik*, Freiburg 1955<sup>2</sup>) however, who is not led by apologetic interests, states frankly: "Die alte Kirche und auch noch das frühe Mittelalter haben der Moralkatechese nicht den Dekalog zugrunde gelegt. (p.99). Zum Grundschema für die Sittenlehre und das Sündenbekenntnis wurde der Dekalog erst im 15. Jahrhundert." (p.100 n.77).

The role the Decalogue played in medieval theology is discussed elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. Outside the Church we have a single piece of evidence of the use of the Decalogue, i.e. in Alfred's Laws<sup>2</sup> (9th cent.). The first part of this compilation consists of Mosaic Laws and places the Decalogue at the head. This Code is followed by a selection of other commandments from the Pentateuch, covering about six times as much space as the Ten Commandments. After some consideration of Jesus' attitude towards the Law, the Apostles' Decree and the further development in the Church, Alfred puts forth his own law. There is no doubt that the Decalogue as well as the other Mosaic commandments have an exclusively juridical purpose. Other laws of that time, as the Sachsenspiegel and the Frankenspiegel, do not contain the Ten Commandments.

Chapter 3: The entry of the Decalogue into the Church as basis for catechetical teaching.

§ 15. The Decalogue as 'Speculum' in auricular confession and as part of the catechism<sup>3</sup>.

1. Development in the 13th century.

In § 14 we have seen that auricular confession was a means of the Church to examine whether the godparents had fulfilled their duty towards their godchild. The penitent first of all had to recite the formula of

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1) § 15.2 a.

2) R. Schmid, Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, Leipzig 1832, p. 32-57.

3) For the pertaining literature see p. 260 n. 1.

In the previous section we have already mentioned that the terms catechesis, catechism, considerably changed their meaning. In the later Middle Ages, "Catechism" designated the questioning of the godparents before baptism. For evidence of this use see Geffcken, op. cit. p. 17-18, e.g. Guido de Monte Rocherii: "Baptismus autem prae-

renunciation, the Creed, the Lord's prayer and eventually the Angelic Salutation. Then followed the confession of sin. In order to assist the memory of the penitent the priest interrogated him by quoting several sins. That this practice was already applied in the 9th century appears from the advice of Regino of Prüm as to how the priests should help the penitent in his confession: "Fortassis, carissime, non omnia, quae gessisti, ad memoriam modo veniunt; ego te interrogabo."<sup>1</sup>

This questioning asked for a systematizing of sins and transgressions, and so there were drafted different catalogues, e.g. the seven capital sins, the nine 'indirect' sins, the five sins crying to heaven, mute sins, the six sins against the Holy Ghost, the sins of the five senses of the body. As counterparts to these sins there are mentioned the seven gifts of the Spirit, the seven beatitudes, the seven spiritual works of mercy, the double commandment of love, the four last things, the seven sacraments, the evangelical counsels etc.<sup>2</sup> All these catalogues formed part of the "books of confession" and were occasionally called 'Speculum Ecclesiae', i.e. mirrors which had to be put before the eyes of the congregation by the priests.<sup>3</sup>

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cedunt cathecismus et exorcismus etc." Occasionally the term is used for 'sponsorship'. As the subjects of catechism (Creed and Lord's Prayer) had to be taught the children and were read to the congregation by the priests, "catechism" eventually was used to denote the actual teaching of these subjects. But until Luther this word was never used to denote a book. (see further p. 307 ). Hence in this section we are using the term catechism in the sense: teaching of the elementary subjects of Christian faith which have to be learned by everybody.

- 1) Holtzmann, op.cit. p. 11
- 2) Concerning the emergence of these forms and the use made of them see Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 197-239.
- 3) "Speculum" or mirror in that time was the usual name for a book containing moral teaching. Originally there was not necessarily a connexion between the term "mirror" and the Decalogue (see e.g. the Sachsenspiegel), but with the growing importance of the Decalogue in the Church, the Ten Commandments eventually formed part of the mirror and were sometimes even identified with it. Joh. Geiler who

In the 13th century the Decalogue made its appearance in the 'Speculum Ecclesiae' and several Synods declared the Ten Commandments as subject of instruction besides the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The Speculum Ecclesiae of the Archbishop Edmund of Canterbury (+ 1246) is the first book of confession which contains the Decalogue. As far as we can make out, it was the Synod of Trier which in 1227 for the first time ordered the priests to teach their congregations, among other subjects, the Ten Commandments, though the Decalogue is not yet given an outstanding position. Thereafter many synods and bishops advised the use of the Ten Commandments, but there were some who stuck to the traditional subjects of catechetical instruction:

1246 The Synod of Clermont provides an explanation of the Decalogue for the instruction of the people.

1246 The Council of Béziers / require that "parish priests see to it

1254 The Council of Albi that they explain to the people on Sundays the articles of faith in simple and clear fashion so that no one may claim a veil of ignorance... Children too from seven upwards, brought to Church by their parents on Sundays and feasts, shall be instructed in the Catholic faith, and parents shall teach them Mary's Salutation, Our Father and Creed". The Council of Albi suggests further that what the bishop cannot accomplish in his own person he should enlist "other reliable and prudent persons" to aid him in doing.<sup>1</sup>

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translated Gerson's 'Opusculum tripartitum' into German and edited it under the title "Der dreieckecht Spiegel" in his introduction connects the term "mirror" with Exod. 30 and 38: "And he made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the tent of meeting" (Ex. 38,8). As the priests facing this mirror became aware of their stains, which they had to wash away before they began their service, so in the Word of God, especially the Law, we recognize our stains of sin, which must be confessed. Geiler then states seven characteristics of the mirror and its use (or misuse) which pertain also to the divine Law. (see Geffcken, op.cit. col. 30-35).

1) Quoted from Sloyan, op.cit. p.27. This endeavour to bring the children under instruction was caused by the danger of heresy (Cathars), as is explicitly stated by the Council of Albi.

- 1255 the Bishop de Kirkham of Durham and / give the following injunction: "Because without the observance of the Decalogue there can be no salvation of souls, we exhort and enjoin in the Lord that every pastor of souls and every parishpriest should know the Decalogue... and should frequently preach and explain the same to the people who are under his control..." Besides the Decalogue are mentioned the seven crimes, the seven sacraments and the Creeds (Nicene and Apostles' Creed)<sup>1</sup>.
- 1281 Synod of Lambeth: Archbishop John Peckham gives an interpretation of the 14 articles of faith (incl. the mysteries of Trinity and the two natures of Christ), the Ten Commandments, the Double Commandment of Love, the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins, the seven main virtues, the seven sacraments.
- 1294 (and 1310), the Synod of Utrecht legislates that the Ten Commandments and the seven sacraments should be explained to the people in their mother tongue once a month or at least three to four times a year<sup>2</sup>.

As subject of ethical teaching the Decalogue came to stand side by side with the Double Commandment of Love (the "Verbum Abbreviatum"). These two Codes were either declared as equivalent (e.g. by the Synod of Lambeth 1281) or combined in such a way that the Decalogue appeared as an exposition of the Double commandment of love or the latter was conceived to be the summary of the Ten Commandments. But finally it was the Decalogue which remained master of the field.

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1) Quoted from Charles Gore, *Dominant Ideas and corrective Principles*, 1918, p. 123

2) see Sloyan, *op.cit.* p. 39-40

## 2. Thomas Aquinas and the Decalogue.

### a) The development of the doctrine of natural law in the Middle Ages.

In § 12.3 b we have depicted how the conception of natural law entered theology and was connected with the Decalogue. So far, however, the natural commandments were not derived from reason, but related to creation. God had implanted the natural precepts in man's heart, and after they had fallen into oblivion God revealed them anew to his chosen people at Mount Sinai. This idea is reproduced without significant changes in the theology of the early Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. Natural law is confined more or less to the Biblical Law.

In early scholasticism the influence of Augustine's doctrine of grace was so strong that the Stoic conception of natural law could not develop yet. The heathen are said to have no knowledge of God's Law, because it is revealed in Holy Scripture. Petrus Lombardus (+ 1160) like Augustine interprets Rom. 2,14-16 as relating to baptized pagans. Psalm 4,7 (*Quis ostendit nobis bona? Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine, dedisti laetitiam in corde meo*) which was used later as a motivation for the doctrine of natural law, is still connected with God's revelation. According to Petrus Lombardus, man's reason was corrupted by sin, but it is renewed by God's grace.<sup>2</sup>

With Wilhelm of Auxerre (+ about 1231) there appears a new conception of natural law<sup>3</sup>. With regard to fallen man he keeps to Petrus Lombardus' definition: "*Vulneratus in naturabilibus, spoliatus vero gratuitis*". Man has thus not lost his natural faculties, though they are weakened by sin. One of these faculties, according to Wilhelm, is the knowledge of God's Law. The soul is able to know God by nature. Wilhelm uses the term "nature" in a double sense. Besides the traditional one (original state of man before the fall) it designates man's empirical

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- 1) cf. Flückiger, *Geschichte des Naturrechtes* I, Zollikon-Zürich 1954 p. 388 ff.
  - 2) Petrus Lombardus, *Comment. in Psalmos*, Migne 191,88:... *lumen vultus tui, scilicet lumen gratiae tuae, quo reformatur imago tua in nobis, qua tibi similes sumus*".
  - 3) Flückiger, *op.cit.* p. 422 ff.



state. A distinction is now made between the supernatural gifts which man has lost and the natural state in which man is able to know God though in an imperfect manner. The commandment of love played an important part in the older (Christian) doctrine of natural law, because it was held that "*ius naturale est quod in lege et Evangelio continetur*". But according to the new development man is no longer exclusively dependent on God's revelation in Holy Scripture, for "empiric man is made the measure of the natural."<sup>1</sup>

It was especially the re-discovered philosophy of Aristotle which influenced the doctrine of natural law in theology. Wilhelm defines natural law as that "which natural reason without any deliberation or at least without great deliberation dictates to do."<sup>2</sup> Though it is the "*naturalis ratio*", man's innate reason, which tells him what to do and though this demand is conceived as natural law, none the less there is supposed to be full agreement between the law of reason and biblical law. The commandments of the Decalogue as well as the Golden Rule are considered fundamental parts of natural law.

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- 1) "Nicht mehr Christus erscheint als das Schöpfungswort und Urbild des Menschen, und also als die Offenbarung der wahren Menschennatur, sondern ein philosophischer Naturbegriff wird zum Ausgangspunkt für die Beurteilung der Menschennatur, und alles, was von diesem abweicht, wird in den abgegrenzten Bereich des Uebernatürlichen zurückgeschoben. Von dieser Voraussetzung her muss wieder, wie einst in der griechischen Philosophie, die menschliche Vernunftnatur zur Norm der Naturgemässheit, d.h. zur *lex naturalis*, werden, und es war bloss mehr eine Frage der Zeit, dass der Grundgedanke des christlichen Naturrechts, das Liebesgebot, wieder aus der Naturrechtslehre verschwinden musste, mitsamt der vielzitierten Formel: *ius naturale est quod in lege et Evangelio continetur*." (Flückiger, op.cit. p. 423).
  - 2) "*Quod naturalis ratio sine omni deliberatione aut sine magna dictat esse faciendum*", quoted from Flückiger, op.cit. p.424.  
cf. Flückiger's statement, ib.: "Diese knappe Formulierung ist geschichtlich von grösster Bedeutung, wird doch hier erstmals wieder klar und ohne Einschränkung das Prinzip des Vernunftrechts in der Naturrechtslehre anerkannt."

With Alexander of Hales (+ 1245)<sup>1</sup> appears the Stoic conception of "lex aeterna". There exists an eternal law of God which governs everything. Man has an innate consciousness of this law. Though the eternal law principally is unchangeable it can be varied in its application according to man's state after the fall. The Decalogue is such an adaption of the eternal law to man's state (nature) which is changed and corrupted by sin. In paradise the commandment of love was sufficient.

Bonaventura (+ 1274)<sup>2</sup> takes up the definitions reached so far and makes some further distinctions. He states that the natural law agrees with the biblical law, but that the latter is more extensive than the former. The natural law is identified with the commandment of the Father, the written one with that of the Word (Christ), and the law of grace (i.e. supernatural perfection) with that of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

The commandments of the second table especially are related to the natural law and can be summarized in the law of beneficence: *hoc facias alii, quod tibi vis fieri*, and in the law of innocence: *non facias alii, quod tibi non vis fieri*. The natural law can be described as law of the right reason (*dictamen rectae rationis*) and is common to all peoples. It may be understood as the impression of the eternal law in man's soul, therefore we can speak of an innate moral consciousness which is not blotted out by sin (*conscientia*). The Stoic conception of natural law is thus conclusively accepted by scholastic theology.<sup>4</sup> The combination of the Platonic speculation about order with the doctrine of natural law in Bonaventura's theology does not concern us here.

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1) see Flückiger, op.cit. p. 426 ff.

2) ib. p. 428 ff.

3) In Hex. coll. XXI nn. 6,7 (V.p.432): "Ab his enim tribus manant tres leges, nec possunt esse plures, scilicet naturae, legis scriptae et gratiae. Lex naturae appropriatur Patri, lex scriptae Verbo, lex gratiae Spiritui sancto. - Lex naturae est lex pietatis ... lex scripta est lex veritatis... lex sancitatis est lex gratiae... Omnis enim moralis lex est secundum haec tria, sive secundum has tres; sed in lege naturae sunt minus distinctae et explicatae, in lege scripta, magis explicatae et minus perfectae, in lege gratiae, magis explicatae et perfectae..." Quoted from Flückiger, op.cit. p. 429.

4) cf. Flückiger, op.cit. p. 430: "Wie einst in der Stoa wird gelehrt,

In conclusion we may say that in the 13th century, especially under the influence of Aristotelian philosophy, the definition of the conception of natural law in theology underwent a considerable change. Until that time it was generally held that the law of nature pertained to the original state of man before his fall and could only be known and restored by God's revelation and grace. But now the law of nature is understood in the stoic sense as the law of natural reason which agrees with the law of the Bible. It is however not derived from the latter, but from the eternal law of which man has an innate consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

b) The Decalogue in Thomas Aquinas' theology.

Thomas takes over from Stoic philosophy the term of eternal law and identifies it with God's wisdom in relation to the world. God has created the world and governs it according to his wisdom, therefore the eternal law is nothing else than the principle in the eternal wisdom, according to which this wisdom guides all actions and movements.<sup>2</sup>

This eternal law is known to everybody. Though man cannot recognize it in its essence, nevertheless he is aware of its effects, even as somebody who does not know the sun according to its substance, recognizes it according to the rays which proceed from it. Therefore "every rational being knows the eternal law". There are of course differences in recognition, but the basic principles of this law are known to everyone<sup>3</sup>. Everything is ruled by the divine law, therefore everything

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dass die menschliche Vernunft teilhat an der ewigen Vernunft Gottes, so dass das natürliche sittliche Bewusstsein selbstredend als übereinstimmend mit dem Gesetz und Willen Gottes angenommen wird. Allerdings wird auch vorausgesetzt, dass dieses Bewusstsein mit den biblischen Forderungen übereinstimme."

- 1) "Die natürliche Ethik, die im Anschluss an die antike Philosophie entfaltet wird, beginnt sich keimhaft als autonomer Bereich von der christlichen Sittlichkeit zu lösen." Flückiger, op.cit. p. 435.

2) S.Th. I/2 qu. 93 a.1

3) S.Th. I/2 qu. 93 a.2.

It is evident that this idea is in close connexion with the doctrine of analogia entis, which plays an important role in Thomas' theology. For this conception we refer to Flückiger, op. cit. p. 438 ff.

partakes of this law. This partaking of the divine law is called the natural law. Psalm 4<sup>1</sup> testifies the natural light in reason, by which we can distinguish good from evil and thus recognize what is in agreement with the natural law. "Therefore the natural law is obviously nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the divine law."<sup>2</sup>

What is the relation of this natural law to the human laws? Through contemplative reason, which participates in the divine wisdom, man has the knowledge of certain general principles. Now it is the task of practical reason to proceed to special laws for particular cases<sup>3</sup>. Hence all human laws are derived from the eternal law. They are true and genuine in so far as they agree with reason. Nevertheless, the human laws cannot attain the perfection of the eternal law<sup>4</sup>. The more reason, dealing with practical issues, departs from the general principles recognized by contemplative reason, the more defection and imperfectness grow<sup>5</sup>.

If we ask Thomas what the demands of natural law are, we find the answer: the first principle, which already contains all the other demands, is, "to do the good and avoid the evil". All other precepts of natural law are grounded on this first principle and tell us to do and strive for all those things which human reason conceives as good for mankind.<sup>6</sup> As man in his nature has an inclination to the good, therefore reason conceives as good anything to which man is inclined by nature. There are thus many precepts in natural law, but it has only one root.<sup>7</sup>

With this definition we actually move in a circle.<sup>8</sup> We want to know what we have to do and find the answer: the good. But what is the good?

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1) see p. 276

2) S.Th. I/2 qu. 91 a.2

3) S.Th. I/2 qu. 91 a.3

4) S.Th. I/2 qu. 93 a.3

5) S.Th. I/2 qu. 94 a.4

6) "Hoc est ergo primum praeceptum legis, quod 'bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum'; et super hoc fundantur omnia alia praecepta legis naturae". S.Th. I/2 qu. 94 a.2

7) S.Th. I/2 qu. 92 a.2

8) see Flückiger, op.cit. p. 454

That which is recognized by reason as good, i.e. the things man is inclined to by nature. What is he inclined to? the good. Hence we have no standard or measure from outside. Man is called to act according to reason (which is identical with acting according to natural law and to do the good), but what is according to reason has to be decided by reason itself. Here we have thus the final victory of the Greek interpretation of the conception of natural law in Christian theology.<sup>1</sup>

We shall not here investigate all the details and implications of Thomas' doctrine of natural law but confine ourselves to the relation of this theory to the Old Testament Law, especially the Decalogue. According to Thomas, the Old Testament revealed the precepts of natural law which were binding for all people, and added some particular laws for Jews only in order to give them priority in holiness over against other peoples<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the Old Testament Law is love, and all the precepts are related to this aim<sup>3</sup>. In the Law we can distinguish moral, ceremonial and judicial precepts. If Paul says that the Law is holy, just and good<sup>4</sup>, he refers to these three kinds of precepts: the moral law is good, the ceremonial holy, and the judicial just.<sup>5</sup>

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1) "Dieser Sieg des Vernunftprinzips in der thomistischen Philosophie ist der Beginn einer neuen Epoche in der Geschichte des Naturrechtsdenkens. Der seit den Kirchenvätern immer wieder unternommene Versuch, dem Naturrecht eine materiale Wertethik zugrunde zu legen - diejenige des mosaischen Gesetzes und des christlichen Liebesgebotes, gemäss der Formel: *ius naturale est, quod in lege et Evangelio continetur* - ist mit Thomas grundsätzlich aufgegeben, insofern nicht mehr die Offenbarung der ursprünglichen Natur in Christus, sondern die natürliche Vernunft Prinzip des Naturrechtes ist." Flückiger, op.cit. p. 454-455.

2) S.Th. I/2 qu. 98 a.5

3) S.Th. I/2 qu. 99 a.1

4) Rom. 7,12

5) S.Th. I/2 qu. 99 a.4



Why was the revelation of the divine law necessary, if reason is able to discern the natural law? Thomas states that reason could not err concerning the most general fundamental principles of natural law. Nevertheless reason was obscured by sin which affected its application of the general principles to the particular cases. Moreover the reason of many erred in the conclusions drawn from these first principles, so that things which are actually evil were presented as permitted and desirable. The authority of God's law is thus a remedy for these two deficiencies.<sup>1</sup>

In the moral Law of the Old Testament Thomas distinguishes three kinds of precepts. The first kind concerns those actions which are recognized without deliberation as in agreement with reason, e.g. the Fifth, Sixth and Eighth Commandments of the Decalogue. Another group of precepts are attained only by careful deliberation, so that a final decision can be given only by the sages, e.g. to "rise up before the hoary head, and to honour the face of an old man."<sup>2</sup> As to the third kind of precepts man needs God's instruction; to this group belong the Second and Third Commandments of the Decalogue. Hence all the moral commandments of the Old Testament belong to natural law, but in a different manner.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere Thomas makes a somewhat varying differentiation, taking the Decalogue as a whole over against the other commandments. He distinguishes three stages concerning moral precepts:

- 1) The general moral principles are known so well that they need not be promulgated, e.g. love towards God and the neighbour. They are, as it were, the aim of all the commandments. In them nobody can err in relation to the judgement of reason.
- 2) Other Commandments are more definite, but it is easy to recognize their reason. Because it is possible - though it happens seldom - that concerning these precepts human judgement may err, they have been promulgated explicitly. These are the Ten Commandments.

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1) S.Th. I/2 qu. 99 a.2  
3) S.Th. I/2 qu. 100 a.1

2) Lev. 19,32



- 3) In the third stage we find the moral precepts, the reason of which is only known to the sages; these commandments were added to the Ten Commandments and taught to the people by Moses and Aaron.<sup>1</sup>

So the Ten Commandments stand between the general moral principles (Double commandment of love) and the commandments gained by way of deduction from the Decalogue. The moral precepts of all three stages have obligatory force because of natural reason, even if they had never been written in the Law. Even the moral commandments which were added to the Decalogue later have their impulse in nature.<sup>2</sup>

According to Thomas' theology, the revelation of the Decalogue was thus almost superfluous, as human judgment guided by reason and nature, does err only in exceptional cases. In another place, however, Thomas is less positive: After the statement that the Ten Commandments are distinguished from the other precepts because they are given directly by God he explains that the Decalogue is related to love, and that it was necessary to promulgate commandments concerning the love towards God and the neighbour, because on this score the natural law was obscured by sin.<sup>3</sup>

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1) "Nam quaedam sunt communissima, et adeo manifesta, quod editione non indigent, sicut mandata de dilectione Dei et proximi, et alia hujusmodi, ut supra dictum est, art. 1 et 3 hujus quaest., quae sunt quasi fines praeceptorum: unde in eis nullus potest errare secundum iudicium rationis. - Quaedam vero sunt magis determinata, quorum rationem statim quilibet etiam popularis potest de facili videre; et tamen quia in paucioribus circa hujusmodi contingit iudicium humanum perverti, hujusmodi editione indigent; et haec sunt praecepta Decalogi. - Quaedam vero sunt quorum ratio non est adeo cuilibet manifesta, sed solum sapientibus; et ista sunt praecepta moralia superaddita Decalogo, tradita a Deo populo per Moysen et Aaron."  
S.Th. I/2 qu. 100 a.11.

2) S.Th. I/2 qu. 100 a.11 ; cf. qu. 100 a.3

3) "--- praecepta Decalogi referuntur ad praecepta dilectionis. Fuit autem dandum praeceptum homini de dilectione Dei et proximi, quia quantum ad hoc lex naturalis obscurata erat propter peccatum."  
S.Th. I/2 qu. 100 a.5

In the New Covenant the moral Law has not lost its validity, whereas the ceremonial law was fulfilled by Christ (and thus abrogated) and the judicial law is left to man for free regulation.<sup>1</sup> There is however a difference between the Old and the New Covenants. The Old Testament Law was engraved in man's heart because it was identical with natural law. But the Law of the New Covenant, which is engraved in man's heart by the Spirit, is added to the natural law as through the gift of grace: it does not only tell what to do, but it helps efficiently to fulfil it.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the new law is the law of grace.<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the outward actions the New Covenant did not add anything to the moral law of the Old Testament. Because the deeds of virtue follow the rule of natural reason, it was not possible to give moral precepts besides those which are indicated by reason.<sup>4</sup> Therefore Christ added only the sacraments, because in them is contained his grace. Moreover the new law regulates the inward actions, as Jesus is concerned with the direction of the will and the inclination of the heart.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover the Lord gave evangelical counsels. The commandments of the New Testament are obligatory, without their observance man cannot attain eternal life. But the counsels are left to the free choice of those to whom they are given. Such counsels were not yet given in the Old Covenant. They show how a man can attain this aim (eternal life) easier and in a more comfortable way<sup>6</sup>. The commandment to love one's

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1) S.Th. I/2 qu. 108 a.2-3

2) S.Th. I/2 qu. 106 a.1

3) Lex nova... principaliter est gratia Spiritus sancti.  
S.Th. I/2 qu. 106 a.3; cf. qu. 108 a.1

4) Sed ad opera virtutum dirigimur per rationem naturalem, quae est regula quaedam operationis humanae... et ideo in his non oportuit aliqua praecepta dari ultra moralia legis praecepta, quae sunt de dictamine rationis. S.Th. I/2 qu. 108 a.2

5) S.Th. I/2 qu. 108 a.3

6) Oportet igitur quod praecepta novae legis intelligantur esse data de his quae sunt necessaria ad consequendum finem aeternae beatitudinis, in quem lex nova immediate introducit; consilia vero oportet esse de illis per quae melius et expeditius potest homo consequi finem praedictum." S.Th. I/2 qu. 108 a.4.

enemy, for instance, is a commandment which applies to everybody for the cases where this love is demanded by some necessity. But if somebody does it promptly and immediately though there is no particular necessity to do so, then it is a counsel, because here he does not follow his own will which could lawfully take revenge.<sup>1</sup>

From this short summary it has become clear how closely the Double Commandment of love and the Decalogue are related to the conception of natural law. Strictly speaking the revelation of God's law was not necessary because it agrees with natural law and can be recognized by man's reason. But this is only so on the face of it. According to Thomas man's natural inclination is only good as far as it agrees with reason, and reason is only authoritative as far as it consents to the good. This "good", however, is nothing else than what Thomas has accepted from the beginning as Christian value. So he deduces from natural law what he already knew from God's revelation as understood and interpreted by him.<sup>2</sup>

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1) S.Th. I/2 qu. 108 a.4

2) see further Flückiger, p. 456/7 and his instructive quotation from Hans Welzel, *Naturrecht und materiale Gerechtigkeit*, 1951, p. 61: "Wenn nun aber nicht alle natürlichen Neigungen 'naturgemäss' im Wertsinne sind, sondern eben nur die guten, lasterfreien, so bündet der Naturbegriff die Fähigkeit ein, das Kriterium für gut und schlecht abzugeben. Nicht das 'Naturgemässe' vermag den konkreten Inhalt des Guten zu definieren, sondern umgekehrt muss das Gute erst bestimmen, was das Naturgemässe ist. So kommt es zu der typisch naturrechtlichen *petitio principii*: was man zuvor als gut empfunden hat, wird als das 'Naturgemässe' hingestellt und dann als Erkenntnisgrund des Guten verwandt. So wird auch bei Thomas die schon vorher feststehende christliche Wertwelt als das Naturgemässe herausgestellt und dann aus diesem 'Natur'-Begriff die christliche Wertwelt scheinbar abgeleitet. Wie die 'Naturgemässheit' von der christlichen Wertwelt vorbestimmt ist, zeigt nichts deutlicher als Thomas' Stellungnahme zur Jungfäulichkeit. Trotz ihres offenkundigen Widerspruchs zur (physischen) 'Naturordnung' stellt er sie doch höher als die Ehe, weil sie als Gut der Seele dem körperlichen Gut vorzuziehen sei. (II/2 qu. 152 a.4)".

c) The Decalogue in Thomas Aquinas' catechetical teaching.

In Lent of 1273, the last Lent of his lifetime, Thomas preached each evening to students and townsfolk in the Church of St. Dominic<sup>1</sup>. From this time we have three series of sermons, a) on the Apostles' Creed, b) on the Lord's Prayer, and c) on the Law (charity and the Decalogue: De decem praeceptis et lege amoris)<sup>2</sup>. As these opuscula circulated widely in the Middle Ages<sup>3</sup> and "became sources for much medieval pulpit instruction"<sup>4</sup> we shall give some consideration to the series on the Law.

The opusculum 14 mentioned above consists of 30 short chapters. At the outset Thomas explains that the knowledge of three things is necessary for salvation: 1) The knowledge of the things which are to be believed, 2) the knowledge of those which are to be desired, and 3) the knowledge of those which have to be done.<sup>5</sup> The first is taught in the Creed, the second in the Lord's Prayer, the third in the Law.

Then Thomas distinguishes four kinds of Law. The first is the natural law, and this is nothing else than the light of reason (lumen intellectus) which was given man in creation<sup>6</sup>. Nobody is ignorant as to the Golden Rule. But the devil put another law in the members of our body, the law of concupiscence<sup>7</sup>. This law of concupiscence often corrupts the natural law, therefore man has to be drawn away from vice and brought to virtue by the law of scripture. This aim is attained by two means: the first is fear, and this is related to the Mosaic Law. But this means was not sufficient, because man was bridled only from outside. Therefore there is another means of diverting man from evil and leading him to good, i.e. love. Hence we are given the law of Christ, i.e. the law of the Gospel which is the law of love. Three differences have to

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1) see Sloyan, The Shaping of the Christian Message, p. 31 ff.

2) Opusculum 14

3) Dict. de Theol. Catholique II p. 1899

4) Sloyan, op.cit. p. 32-33

5) Tria sunt homini necessaria ad salutem: scil. scientia credendorum, scientia desiderandorum, et scientia operandorum.

6) Ps. 4,5

7) Rom. 7

be considered between the law of Moses and the Law of Christ. First, the law of fear made those who observed it slaves, but the law of love made them free. Second, those who observed the first law were led to earthly goods, those of the second law to heavenly goods. Third, the first law is heavy, the second light.

After this introduction Thomas in eight chapters deals with the double commandment of love. He places it in the light of the Gospels and Epistles and quotes ten fruits which are effected in us by this law, then he gives an interpretation of both these commandments.

In ch. 10 - 29 Thomas explains the Ten Commandments. The whole law of Christ depends on love, but love hangs on the double commandment of love.<sup>1</sup> In the Ten Commandments which Moses was given by God the first three precepts which were written on the first table pertain to the love towards God, the seven written on the 2nd table pertain to the love of the neighbour. Hence the whole law is based on two commandments<sup>2</sup>. His interpretation of the Ten Commandments is very systematic. Each point is proved by texts from the Old and New Testaments. It is striking how often he quotes from the Gospels and the Epistles. The paragraph on the Sixth Commandment is followed by a chapter<sup>3</sup> with the heading "On the perfection of the evangelical law above that of Moses; about anger", thus dealing with anger, proceeding from Mt. 5,21.

In the closing chapter<sup>4</sup> Thomas states that these are the Ten Words of which Jesus said<sup>5</sup>: Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata. Then he emphasizes again that two are the principal roots of all the commandments, i.e. the love of God and the neighbour, and closes with a summary of the Ten Commandments and his interpretation of them.

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1) Tota lex Christi dependet a charitate, Charitas autem pendet ex duobus praeceptis, quorum unum est dilectione Dei, reliquum de dilectione proximi.

2) Ideo tota lex fundatur in duobus praeceptis.

3) ch. XXI

4) ch. XXX

5) Mt. 19,17

This series of sermons on the Double Commandment of love and the Decalogue is very instructive for several reasons:

- 1) Thomas stands, as it were, on the threshold between the old and the new practices in catechetical instruction. So far the double commandment of love had been the 'verbum abbreviatum' underlying the ethical teaching<sup>1</sup>, but now the Decalogue joins this commandment and interprets it, but as a matter of fact the Ten Commandments are interpreted wholly in the light of the 'verbum abbreviatum'. The law of Christ is clearly represented as superior to the Old Testament Law.
- 2) "The knowledge of those things which have to be done", according to Thomas, is imparted by the Double Commandment of Love and the Decalogue. But as the Ten Commandments in the period which followed were considered a more adequate means for auricular confession than the double commandment of love<sup>2</sup>, the former became more and more important. Finally the commandment of love appeared at best as summary of the Decalogue (Calvin's catechism), or it was reduced to the stereotyped formula "we shall fear and love God..." (Luther's small catechism) or it was entirely suppressed (Catechismus Romanus).
- 3) There is a striking parallel between Thomas' introduction to the present sermons on the law and Luther's introduction to "Ein kurze Form...":

Thomas: Tria sunt homini necessaria ad salutem...<sup>3</sup>

Luther: Drey dingk seyn nott eynem menschen zu wissen, das er selig werden muge....<sup>4</sup>

We notice, however, a difference in the sequence. Thomas has Creed, Lord's Prayer, Law, whereas Luther puts the Law before the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. It seems that Thomas does not relate the Law

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1) see Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 29 ff

2) see below p. 300

3) see above p. 286 n.5

4) see below p. 308



primarily to auricular confession - his Confessionale omits the Decalogue - whereas for Luther the Ten Commandments were used as mirror of confession so that he started with Law/repentance which was followed by Gospel/Creed.

### 3. The exceeding importance of the Decalogue in the 15th century.

After the Decalogue had been introduced as 'Speculum' in auricular confession and made a catechetical subject by several synods and bishops in the 13th century<sup>1</sup>, this Code became more and more popular. It was made the subject matter of exegesis, sermons and poems, - the latter in order to facilitate its memorizing - and appeared in a considerable number of books of confession. Nevertheless there were still some such books which made no use of the Ten Commandments, but related the confession to some catalogues of sins, e.g. the Bihtebuoch of the 14th century. Likewise, not all the Synods ordered the regular reading of the Decalogue from the pulpit together with the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The Synods of Eichstätt (1447 and 1453) enjoined that once a year the Decalogue should be explained in sermons 'una cum vitiorum correctione', but as far as the reading was concerned these synods stuck to the traditional subjects. The Synods of Pomesania (1428 and 1440) and that of Ermland (1449) do not mention the Ten Commandments at all.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the 14th and in the 15th centuries however the Decalogue became so predominant that it almost overshadowed the other parts of the catechism.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that the older catalogues of sins and virtues disappeared. The seven deadly sins<sup>4</sup> appear in almost every catechetical treatise, whereas varying use is made of the other catalogues, according to the predilection of the respective writers.

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1) see above p. 274 ff.

2) see F. Cohrs, Zur Katechese am Ende des MA, ZpTh XX 1898 p.293-294  
see further below p. 296

3) "Es kann gar kein Zweifel sein, dass die zehn Gebote im 15. Jh. ein Stück und zwar das vornehmste Stück des Catechismus ausmachten, denn über keins ist damals mehr geschrieben worden, keins wurde eifriger getrieben." Geffcken, op.cit. p.21

4) superbia, invidia, ira, accidia, gula, avaricia, luxuria

With the development of the institution of auricular confession went an extending of literary production. We have depicted the origin of this branch in § 14.3 and mentioned four "catechisms" of the 9th century. It is self-evident that the production and publication of treatises and books greatly increased after printing had been invented. A bibliography of the last century containing the books which were printed before 1500 enumerates 16,299 volumes<sup>1</sup>.

The books concerning our subject can be divided roughly into two groups: a) treatises in Latin for the instruction of father confessors or as practical aid for the confession, b) treatises in the vernacular for laymen<sup>2</sup>. We cannot make a full examination of the catechetical literature of the 15th century<sup>3</sup>. Geffcken has treated this subject in his book mentioned above and has published the parts of several 'catechisms' of that time concerned with the Decalogue<sup>4</sup>. We go on to mention only some instances which are of particular interest.

- a) Nicolaus de Lyra (+ 1340) had been given a rabbinic education. After he entered the Church he became famous for his interpretation of the Bible<sup>5</sup>. His "Praeceptorium seu expositio in decalogum" seems to have been of great influence for the use and interpretation of the Decalogue in the following centuries. Geffcken gives part of a German adaptation of Lyra's Praeceptorium which he found in a manuscript of 1452. Though

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1) Geffcken, op.cit. p. 1

2) see Geffcken, op.cit. p. 28-49. Geffcken distinguishes three kinds: a) books about the Ten Commandments for wise and learned Father confessors, b) books for unlearned Father confessors for immediate practical use, c) writings in the vernacular for popular use.

3) A list of catechetical books until 1500 is found in Meyer, op.cit. p. 73-75

4) Geffcken, op.cit. Siebenundzwanzig Beilagen, after p. 114

5) cf. the saying: 'si Lyra non lirasset, Lutherus non saltasset'! Geffcken, op.cit. p. 30

the Decalogue for Lyra is of outstanding value it is not yet considered part of the 'catechism'. This is obvious from his interpretation of the first commandment where he mentions the subjects which a Christian ought to know<sup>1</sup>.

In 1408 the Chancellor of the University of Paris, Johann Gerson (1363-1429) published his famous 'Opusculum Tripartitum de Praeceptis Decalogi de Confessione et de Arte Moriendi'. This book is intended to be a compendium for inexperienced priests and father confessors, but also for the common people, especially the young.

For the latter Gerson published his Opusculum also in French, and soon afterwards it was translated into German. Of the six parts of the book (God the creator, the fall of man, redemption, the Law, confession, the art of dying) the part of the Law, i.e. the Ten Commandments, is the largest one. After the invention of printing Gerson's work was printed several times in the three languages mentioned above. In France it became an official book of instruction. In Wittenberg it was printed again in 1513 by the Augustinians, thus under the eyes of M. Luther. The title of the German translation is "der dreieckecht Spiegel"<sup>2</sup>.

Johann Nieder (+ 1438) wrote a great number of books. His main work, the Preceptorium or Explicatio Decalogi, was printed more than 20 times before 1500 and reprinted in the 16th and even in the 17th centuries.

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- 1) "Die dritten werden verdampt, die da sumig sint in dem glouben, also das sie die stücke des gloubens nit lernen, so were, das sie das wol getuon mochten, und schuldich sint. Sunderlich die leyen etliche stuck offentlich und merklich (explicite et implicite) als die mensch-eit unsers heren Cristi geburt, sin liden und urstende und driueltigkeit. Also das ein ieglicher mensch ist schuldig zu lernen die zwolff stuck des heiligen glouben, der zuo sins tagen ist kommen, es sy dan, das er nicht lerer hab oder so ungelernig sy. Dar umb sint schuldig die gevattern ire totlin (Pathen) als ir geistlichen kind zu lernen den glouben und das pater noster." (Geffcken, col. 24).
  - 2) The part about the Decalogue is published by Geffcken, op.cit. col. 35-47.

It contains a very detailed interpretation of the Ten Commandments (the First Commandment covers 22 chapters!) and was written for preachers and father confessors on the request of the brethren of his order (Dominican).

The most voluminous book on the Decalogue of that time is Heinrich Herp's (+ 1478) 'Speculum aureum de praeceptis divinae legis'. Herp, Provincial of the order of Franciscans, was famous for his preaching. His 'Speculum aureum' is an interpretation of the Decalogue in the form of 221 (sic) sermons.

Under the pseudonym "Discipulus" Joh. Herolt wrote 'De eruditione Christi fidelium' (1418) which was reprinted several times and became an example for other books of confession. The following subjects are treated in this work: 1) the Ten Commandments, 2) the 'indirect' sins 3) the deadly sins, 4) the works of mercy, 5) the Lord's Prayer, 6) the Ave Maria, 7) the Creed, 8) the Sacraments, 9) the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Another treatise which became very popular and influenced the ensuing literature is the 'Tractatus de instructione seu directione simplicium confessorum' by Antonin of Florenz. This book was edited more than 70 times before 1500 and appeared under different titles<sup>1</sup>. The arrangement is as follows:

- ch. 1-12: general directions for the father confessor concerning frequent cases
- ch. 13-22: Questions about the Ten Commandments
- ch. 23-29: Questions about the seven deadly sins
- ch. 30-47: Questions for different classes
- ch. 48-49: on absolution and penitence.

From Savonarola we possess two treatises about the Ten Commandments.<sup>2</sup> The first one is an exposition of the Decalogue for the nuns of the

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1) Besides the one mentioned above: Summula confessionis; De audienda confessionum; Confessionale; Interrogatorio; Specchio di Coscienza; Medicina del anima etc.

2) see Geffcken, op.cit. col. 206-213

convent della Murate in Florence, the second one, 'Eruditorium confessorum' is written for inexperienced father confessors. The questioning of the penitent follows the order of the Ten Commandments, as for Savonarola all the precepts can be derived from the Decalogue.

A well-known work of the beginning of the 16th century is the 'Manuale Curatorum' by Joannes Ulricus Surgant. This book deals with the subjects of homiletics, catechetics and pastoral theology. It is written in Latin, but the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the Apostles' Creed and the Decalogue are given in German and French and the priests are advised to read these forms to the congregation in the vernacular every Sunday and to hang up tables with these forms in the churches. Whoever does not know these texts by heart may not be admitted to the Eucharist.

- b) One of the oldest books of penitence in the vernacular - and thus written for non-priests - is the so-called 'Somme le Roi' (originally 'La somme des vices et vertus') of 1279, written by frère Laurent, father confessor of King Philipp III. This book which was translated and published in Dutch in 1408 (Des Coninx Summe) contains the following parts:
- 1) des sept péchés mortels, 2) Articles de la foy, 3) les dix commandements de la loy, 4) de la science de bien mourir, 5) les petitions de la Patenostre, 6) des sept dons du saint Esprit, 7) les dignetés de l'arbre de chastée<sup>1</sup>.

The 'Heidelberg Bilderhandschrift' contains another old "catechism" of the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century<sup>2</sup>. The manuscript of 110 sheets contains many pictures and deals particularly with the Ten Commandments, auricular confession and several kinds of sins. The author says that he bases himself upon Latin texts which shows clearly that this book forms a link between the books of confession used

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1) The part containing the interpretation of the Decalogue is published by Geffcken, op.cit. col. 81-85 (Dutch edition)  
 2) Geffcken, op.cit. col. 1-20

by the priests and the popular instruction given to lay people. The keeping of the Law is the way to eternal life: "Wiltu yn das ewige leben gehen, So saltu feste yn den geboten gotis stehen". Therefore the interpretation of the Decalogue is given a large place. At the end of the first part man is warned again: "Wyltu yn den hymmel gehn czu gote, So halt dy czehn gebote." Then follow the subjects confession and penitence with detailed advice concerning auricular confession. A minor part deals with different kinds of God's calling and gives further warnings against sin. The book closes with the explanation of the nine sins of others caused by us, and the seven capital sins.

The "Mirror of the Sinner" (Spiegel des Sünders, about 1470)<sup>1</sup> shows very distinctly the connexion between Decalogue and auricular confession. After 18 chapters concerning sin, confession and penitence in general, and 8 chapters discussing the mortal sins, follows in chapters 27-37 the confession starting from the Ten Commandments; "nach vollendung der siben todsünden wil ich nun leren, Was zebeichten sei und wie aus den X botten." The interpretations of the respective commandments are connected with innumerable questions which have to serve for self-examination and confession before the priest<sup>2</sup>. The aim of this book, especially of its last part, is summarized at the end of ch. 37: "Das seyen nun die zehen gebot des götlichen gesatzes. In den und andern vorlauffenden leren der siben todsünden und andern etc. Mügen wir als in einem polierten, geseüberten und reynen spiegel die warheit der cristelichen regel und ordnung durch lesen und alles unsers lebens der selen und des gewissens schoene und befleckung unterschiedelich durchschawen, wann aus diser aller lere, wie vor, erkennet der mensch den lauf und vertzerung (consumptio) seines lebens, wie er die götlichen bot gehalten habe, wie er da von abtreten sey, wie er durch manigerley

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1) see Geffcken, op.cit. col. 47-80

2) This examination, following the commandments of the Decalogue, covers 28 columns in Geffcken's edition.



gestalt der sünden got beleydiget hab, wie und in welcher mass er sein sünd beichten sol."<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Confession by Johannes Wolff (Lupi, † 1468) is so important for our investigation that we shall deal with it in a special section.

There could be mentioned many other similar works of that time<sup>2</sup>, but as we do not aspire to give an extensive survey of the pertinent literature this may suffice. Most of the books of confession and mirrors of the 14th and 15th centuries appear to be basically similar, though there are differences in design and approach. People who did not read those books heard at least the parts of the 'catechism' read to them from the ambo during worship. The council of Basel in its 15th meeting on the 26th November 1433 ordered that the Synods of the dioceses should urge the priests to instruct the people regularly in wholesome doctrine and exhortation<sup>3</sup>. Thereafter many synods renewed the rule that the

1) Geffcken, op.cit. col. 79.

2) Following Geffcken we mention:

Beichte nach den zehn Geboten (aus einer Handschrift der Hamburger Stadtbibliothek) col. 86-88

Ludolf von Göttingen, Eyn speyghel des cristen ghelouen, 1472, col. 88-98.

Der Seele Trost (Beichtspiegel von 1474) col. 98-106

Die Hymelstrass, by Stephanus Lanzkranna, Probst of St. Dorotheen in Wien, col. 106-119.

Beichttafel of the year 1481, col. 119-121

The Lübecker Beicht- und Gebetbücher, col. 122-157.

Nicolaus Rus of Rostock, Ueber die drei ersten Hauptstücke, col.

Tractat über die zehn Gebote, col. 166-174. 159-166

Wolffenbütteler Handschriften, col. 176-179.

Johann Schott, Spiegel Christliche walfart, Strasburg 1509, col. 179-

'Peniteas cito' or 'Penitentionarius', col. 188-196. 188

'The poor Caitiff', attributed by Geffcken to John Wickliff, obviously does not stem from Wicliff himself; see Kropatscheck, Der Pauper rusticus, in ZKG 36 p. 502-507: "Von seiten der neueren Wicliff-forschung ist nun gar kein Zweifel darüber gelassen worden, dass der Pauper rusticus nicht von Wicliff stammt." p. 503/4.

For a more extensive list of pertinent literature see Meyer, op.cit. p. 73-75

3) "Diocesanus vel alius eius nomine verbum Dei proponat, exhortando omnes ad bonos mores sectandum... et ad ea, quae pertinent ad eccle-

subjects of catechism were to be read every Sunday from the pulpit. There was however no general agreement as to the essential parts of this catechism. The Synods of Würzburg (1453), Passau (1466), Mainz (1493), Basel (1503), Speier (1509) and Regensburg (1512) decided that the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, the Creed and the Ten Commandments had to be recited every Sunday. The Synod of Mainz of 1469 prescribed the reading of the confession the five senses, the seven deadly sins and the Ten Commandments. The Synod of Samland (1471) mentions the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation and the Ten Commandments (the Decalogue thus replacing the traditional Creed!). The Synods of Eichstädt (1447 and 1453) stuck to the usual reading of Creed and Lord's Prayer, whereas the Decalogue was to form the subject of preaching. The Synods of Bamberg (1491, 1506 and 1507) ordered the reading of the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation and the Creed, and sermons on the Decalogue.<sup>1</sup>

As a rule the Church did not consider youth-instruction as her direct task. Parents were occasionally told to bring their children to worship, and together with the godparents they had to teach the young the subjects of the catechism. But no book was written particularly with the aim of youth instruction, though it was indubitably supposed that the prayer-books, the books of confession and the "mirrors" would enable the adults to teach their children properly. Occasionally this concern is made known in such books.<sup>2</sup>

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siasticam disciplinam et officia singulorum, et praesertim ut hi, quibus animarum cura commissa est, diebus Dominicis et aliis solemnitatibus plebem subiectam doctrinis et monitis salutaribus instruant." (quoted from Cohrs, op.cit. p. 233.)

1) Cohrs, op.cit. p. 271

2) The title of the 'Tafel eines christlichen Lebens' says that all Christians are obliged to keep these tables in their house for themselves as well as for their children and servants, and Dederich's 'Christenspiegel' shows in the 40th chapter "how the parents are to teach their children in order that they may be saved." Cohrs, op.cit. p.240.

As an exception we may note the "Kinderfragen" of the Bohemian Brethren which were written and used especially for the teaching of children.<sup>1</sup>

We have already pointed to the fact that there was no unanimity with regard to the subjects which were to be read from the pulpit and still less concerning those treated in the "mirrors of confession." The catalogues of sins and virtues mentioned on p. 273 were further analysed, extended or rearranged in new schemes, so that it eventually became necessary to bring some order into this confusing matter. There appeared a tendency to relate the different catalogues to the main parts of the catechism, i.e. the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Decalogue.

#### 4. Johannes Wolff, Doctor Decem Preceptorum.

Of special interest for our research is the book of confession of Johannes Wolff (Lupi), first preacher at the Church of Frankfurt a.M. from 1453-1468.<sup>2</sup> This book was printed in 1478, ten years after Wolff's death. At first sight it does not seem to differ essentially from other books of confession of that time. In the first short part we have a pattern for confession for children and others who confess for the first time.<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of the Decalogue is followed by the traditional lists of sins and virtues. The second, more extensive part gives the fundamentals for the confession of adult people.<sup>4</sup> This part opens with a detailed explanation about the meaning of the Ten Commandments (15 pages), then follow the Creed, the 5 calling sins, the 5 outward sins, the 7 capital sins, the 9 sins of others caused by us, the 6 sins against the Holy Spirit, the 8 works of charity, the 7 sacraments,

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1) see below page 302 ff.

2) For the following see: Beichtbüchlein des Magisters Johannes Wolff (Lupi), Neu herausgegeben, mit einer Einleitung, einer Uebersetzung ins Neuhochdeutsch und mit erklärenden Noten versehen von F.W. Battenberg, Giessen 1907; further: Ferd. Cohrs, Zur Katechese am Ende des Mittelalters, ZpTh XX 1898, p. 289-309.

3) Vor die anhebenden kynder und ander zu bichten in der ersten bijcht,  
p. 1-5

4) Vor die zunehmende gelerten ond ungelerten vorstendigen menschen zu bychten etc. p. 6-38.

the 8 beatitudes, the 7 gifts of the Spirit, and, after the definition of capital sin and contrition, the book of confession proper closes with the word: "Et sic est finis exposicionum et declaracionum vulgarium decem preceptorum."<sup>1</sup> Battenberg calls Lupi's book the most learned and systematic among all the books of confession<sup>2</sup>, but there is no doubt that he was influenced to a great extent by Gerson's opus tripartitum.<sup>3</sup>

The peculiarity of Lupi is that he traces back all the parts of his book to the Ten Commandments. The Apostolic Creed is connected with the first Commandment, and in his interpretation of the catalogues of sins, Lupi repeatedly states that whoever has committed one of these sins has transgressed one of the Commandments of the Decalogue. The seven deadly sins, for instance, are related to the following precepts of the Decalogue: pride to commandments 1 and 5; covetousness to 8 and 10; lust to 7 and 10; sloth to 1,4,5 and 7;<sup>4</sup> anger to 3,6,8,9 and 10;

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- 1) Beichtbüchlein p. 39.
  - 2) "Kein anderes Beichtbuch arbeitet auch nur im entferntesten mit diesem gelehrten Apparat, mit dieser Fülle von Zitaten, mit dieser breiten Grundlage der scholastischen Wissenschaft." Battenberg, op.cit. p. 90.
  - 3) see Battenberg, op.cit. p. 91 and his notes 109 and 110 on p. 205.
  - 4) As an example of how systematically Lupi traces back the sins to the Ten Commandments we quote his interpretation of the sin of sloth: "Dragheynt an gotis dinst. Dragheynt an gotes dinst uberdrutte die gebodt. Heit eyner syn gebodt. buss. horas messe williglichen underwegen gelassen ader nit recht gebodt ader nit nydder geknyet mit beyden knyeen in der fasten so er syn preces hat gesprochen ader geyn (= vor) dem sacrament so hat er gethan widder das erste gebodt eyn got saltu anbeden etc. und eren. Ader hat er nit messe und predige gehort an dem sonntag so dut er widder das dritte gebot fyertag fyer. Ader hait er langegeslaffen an dem fyertage une hait verlesslichen das ampt versumet so ist ess widder fyertage fyer. Hat er syn faste tage verlesslichen zubrochen so hat er getan widder syn muter die heilige cristelichen kyrche und widder das vierde gebodt und in eren habe dyne eldern. Ader mylch spise ader die stunde vorkomen (= verfrüht) mit dem essen etc. Ist der mentsche drege gewest geyn synen eldern yne nit zu hulff ist kommen mit der narunge

envy to 6 and 10; gluttony to 1,4,6,8 and others. Occasionally Lupi explains also that the sins are transgressions of the commandment of love: "Czorn ist widder die lieb gotis. Paulus Caritas non irritatur non cogitat malum etc. und auch widder die liebe des nehsten in siner wirkunge und wercken. Die lieb des nehsten ist beslossen und ingeknopt in den lesten sieben geboden."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he is of the opinion that the Double Commandment of Love is not very useful for confession and must be replaced by the Decalogue.<sup>2</sup>

In an appendix Lupi gives some further explanation concerning the keeping of the Law and man's destiny, then he explains in detail the good fruits that would result if the Ten Commandments were recited often during Church Service<sup>3</sup>. In the following we shall summarize the 14 fruits which Lupi expects from the regular reading of the Ten Commandments:

- 1) After a short time everybody would be able to recite the Ten Commandments, even animals would learn it, whether they liked it or not, if they had the organs to utter words. The minister is told to recite short phrases which are to be repeated word by word by the congregation, as is the custom with the Creed.
- 2) Everybody would learn which is the first, the second, the sixth commandment etc.

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ader sye nit gedrost ader geeret hait so dut er widder das vierde gebodt. und in eren haben din eldern. Ader so er nach synem vermogen nit almussen gibt den armen mentschen so ist ess auch widder das vierde gebodt und mag auch syn widder das syebende Nyemant nit stelen. Bychte eyner in der fasten nit so ist ess widder sin muter die heylige kyrche und widder das vierde gebodt. Komet eyner uss dragheynt in verczwifelunge an dem dinst gotis ader barmherczykeyt so dut er widder das wort des ersten gebots hoffen. Et sic de aliis modis accidie etc." Beichtbüchlein p. 25.

- 1) Beichtbüchlein p. 26
- 2) see below point 7.
- 3) "Item multi boni fructus utiles et proficui orientur ex frequenti explicacione decem preceptorum in ambone post symbolum apostolorum". Beichtbüchlein p. 42-45.



- 3) The sermons would be understood better, because in the sermons there are always references to subjects which are somehow in connexion with the Ten Commandments.
- 4) The knowledge of the Decalogue would lead to a better method of confession; people would learn how to express themselves, so that general and meaningless statements could be avoided.
- 5) It would be easier to examine the extenuating and aggravating circumstances of the transgressions, as well as the consideration of the number and the condition of time etc.
- 6) The penitent would attain more easily the necessary contrition in relation to the deadly sins.
- 7) The penitent would understand better the double commandment of love. Many confess that they love God, nevertheless they use His name in vain and do not keep the Sabbath. This applies also to the transgression of the other commandments. They even say that they are not able to take care and to refrain. The Ten Commandments, however, if understood correctly, are the spirit of the double commandment of love: the letter kills, but the spirit vivifies<sup>1</sup>.
- 8) People would no longer be able to excuse themselves with ignorance.
- 9) People would understand the saying: you have ten fingers in order to keep the Ten Commandments.
- 10) People would understand what are the deadly sins, according to the definition of Augustine.
- 11) The children would also become acquainted with the Ten Commandments.
- 12) People would understand better the relevance of the traditional lists of sins and virtues.
- 13) Satisfaction would follow.
- 14) The monks (religiosi) and the towns (civitates renensium) would be admonished to follow this order of the Decalogue in their teaching

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1) "Item decem precepta intellecta sunt spiritus illorum pretactorum preceptorum litera occidit spiritus vivificat ergo etc."



and in auricular confession. The merchants of the fair of Frankfurt would tell their superiors about it and the general welfare would be increased and multiplied.

After this, Lupi quotes several objections brought forward by priests and lay people against this new order, e.g. that it is enough to know and to keep the Double Commandment of Love or the Golden Rule, or that one cannot be obliged to know the Ten Commandments, or that it is sufficient to confess the sins which one has committed etc. But these objections are refuted by Lupi on the ground of Old Testament injunctions and in the light of his 14 points mentioned above.

The book closes with an indication that auricular confession can be brought to a more satisfactory standard only if the Decalogue is read regularly to the people. Because if the Ten Commandments are only preached every one or two years, many people do not hear them and others will forget them again. "Und in zweyen iaren uss eynem kalp wirt eyn kuwe."<sup>1</sup>

This book of confession of Lupi is exceedingly instructive, because in it are focussed the various factors which gave the Decalogue a new and important position in the Church. With strong reasons the reading of the Ten Commandments at every mass, immediately after the sermon, is urged. The sins of all the traditional catalogues are found to be related to the Ten Commandments. The Double Commandment of Love which so far had been the summary of God's law is practically ruled out and replaced by the Decalogue, and this Code is put alongside the Creed with equal importance.

Johannes Wolff seems to have been a very popular preacher and teacher, and his championship of the Decalogue has characterized him to such an extent that he was given the predicate of "Doctor of the Ten Commandments" (Doctor Decem Preceptorum). In 1895 his tomb was discovered in

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1) Beichtbüchlein, p. 49

the Church of St. Peter in Frankfurt which shows the picture of Lupi with the circular inscription: "Anno + domini + MCCCC + LXVIIJ + magister + Johannes + lupi + primus + plebanus + huius + ecclesie + doctor + decem-preceptorum + dei + obiit + in + die-sancti + Iheronimi". At the side of this memorial are hewn 12 pictures showing the transgressions of the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. The "Kinderfragen" of the Bohemian Brethren.<sup>2</sup>

The small book of the Bohemian Brethren known by the title "Kinderfragen"<sup>3</sup> may be called the first catechism in the sense of the term which became predominant during and after the Reformation. Its oldest extant edition is of the year 1522. In that year a German translation of this catechism was presented to Luther who refers to it in his tract "Vom Anbeten des Sacraments etc."<sup>4</sup> J. Müller, however, comes to the conclusion that the "Kinderfragen" existed already in 1502.<sup>5</sup> The first part of the catechism deals with living faith, the second with dead faith. We are concerned here with the first part, in which faith is related to the three persons of the Trinity.

The Apostles' Creed is read over and the child is then asked what it means to believe in God. Answer: to know God, to love him and to do according to his words. This leads to the Ten Commandments. Then it is explained that the Ten Commandments depend on the commandment of love towards God and the neighbour<sup>6</sup>, and we are brought to the second person of the Trinity by the beautiful question 23: "Welche ist die gruntfeste der liebe? Antwort. Der Herr Jesus Christus. Als da spricht Sant Paulus. Keyner mag gelegen ein ander gruntfeste onn die, die da ist

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1) see Battenberg, op.cit. p. 112 ff. who gives also a reproduction of this noteworthy memorial.

2) see G.v. Zezschwitz, Die Katechismen der Waldenser und Böhmisches Brüder, Erlangen 1863, and

J. Müller, Die Deutschen Katechismen der Böhmisches Brüder, Berlin 1887, MGP Vol. IV.

For the catechism of the Waldensians and its relationship to the Kinderfragen we refer to the careful studies mentioned above.

3) compiled by Lukas

4) J. Müller, op.cit. p. 29 ff.

5) ib. p. 48

6) qu. 18-22.

gelegt, die ist Jesus Christus." If we believe in Christ we love him and keep his commandments. Question 27 quotes the six commandments of Christ.<sup>1</sup> But the greatest commandment of Christ is to believe in him. To those who believe in him he has promised the blessing in eight words which are subsequently quoted.<sup>2</sup>

Then the catechism deals with the subject of eternal life and asks: by what shall man attain to this truth? Answer: By faith, love and hope, which are given by the Holy Spirit. This opens the short section concerning the third person of the Trinity. From qu. 41 on we are told how to honour God with the heart, the mouth and with works, and as answer to qu. 46 the child has to say the Lord's Prayer. The second part deals with dead faith concerning dead things, i.e. idolatry, wrong hopes and mortal desires<sup>3</sup>, and the catechism closes with some exhortations.

We find thus in these "Kinderfragen" the three main parts of the "catechism" as developed in the 14th and 15th centuries, i.e. Creed, Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer. Besides, the commandment of love is stressed very strongly and has a more central position than the Decalogue. Moreover, through the trinitarian arrangement, the commandments of Christ and the eight beatitudes are given an important place in this ethical teaching.<sup>4</sup>

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1) Das erst. Nit zu zurnen mit seinem bruder. Das ander. Nit zu sehen das weib Sie zu begern. Das dritt. Nit zuerlassen das eeweib on die vrsach der Eebrecherey. Das vierd. Nit zu schweren vberall. Das funfft. Vbel vmb vbel nit zuergelten. Das seste. Lieb zu haben deine feind, vnd wolthun deynen widersachern.

2) qu. 31. 3) qu. 49-73.

4) The six commandments of Christ were taken in a strict legalistic sense by the old Brethren, but towards the end of the 15th century, after the division into two groups, they were no longer taken in the literal sense by the greater party, and the "law of Christ" was equated mainly with the commandment of love.

see J. Müller, op.cit. p. 113 f.

J. Müller has investigated the sources of this Bohemian catechism and discusses two catechisms from Hussite circles from the first part of the 15th century, i.e. the Hussite catechism from the collection of Palacky<sup>1</sup> and the fragments of the catechism of Raudnitz<sup>2</sup>. He presumes that under the followers of Huss there was already developed a certain form of catechism which was possibly used by the Bohemian brethren, so that Lukas with his Kinderfragen grounded on an older tradition. We are not concerned here with the relation between this Hussite catechism and the Kinderfragen. Our interest lies in the ethical teaching of this old document.<sup>3</sup>

Like the "Kinderfragen", the Hussite catechism is divided in two parts, i.e. concerning living faith and dead faith. Likewise the first part is related to the three persons of the Trinity, but here no reference to the Ten Commandments is made. After the presentation of the Creed which gives the content of the living faith we find the question 12: "Was ist ein Christ?" and hear the answer: "Ein Christ ist, wer dem Herrn Jesu Christo in den Werken nachfolgt und ihn in Tugenden nachahmt", and in qu. 13 we are given the definition of the true Christian: "Ein wahrer Christ ist der, welcher nachdem er Sünde gethan hat sie bereut, sein Leben in Uebereinstimmung mit der hl. Schrift führt, nämlich welcher die Gebote Gottes erfüllt, das Bild der hl. Dreieinigkeit nicht befleckt."

Later on the catechism asks what it means to believe in God (qu.49): "Das ist glauben an ihn, zu ihm gehen, in seine Glieder sich einleiben

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1) J. Müller, op.cit. p. 78 ff.

2) ib. p. 90 ff.

3) Palacky conjectures that this catechism was composed by Huss himself. J. Müller is doubtful about Huss' authorship and supposes that it stems from the early time of Hussitism. see Müller, op.cit. p. 86-87.

und so ihn über alles lieben." Then, with reference to Joh. 14, Deut. 10, 1 Joh. 4 and Deut. 6, we are told why and how we have to love God. Qu. 68 quotes Christ's command to love each other, and the following question, "Why are we to love our neighbour?" is thus answered: "Weil wir alle durch einen Geist leben und alle einen Glauben haben, eine Taufe empfangen haben, einen Vater und Gott haben und alle zu einem Reich eingehen sollen; und auch noch deswegen sollen wir uns lieben, damit daran alle erkennen, dass wir Gottes Jünger sind."

This is thus a catechism from the time when the Decalogue had not yet attained its firm position as a main part in the catechetical instruction. The ethical teaching is developed exclusively from the double commandment of love. It is very instructive that in a marginal remark from a later time there is made mention of the Ten Commandments in connexion with qu. 66 f., but then is added immediately that the Law and the Prophets depend on the double commandment of love. The development of catechetical teaching within a century is thus clearly discernible: first the double commandment of love forms the only basis, then the Decalogue appears in a marginal remark, in the Kinderfragen this code has entered the text and precedes the commandment of love, and with Luther the Decalogue has replaced the double commandment of love.

It is interesting to contemplate what would have been the form of the catechisms of the Reformation if Luther had taken up the Hussite catechetical tradition without being influenced by the development of the institution of auricular confession, in which the Decalogue had attained an outstanding position within a relatively short space of time.

## § 16. Luther and the Decalogue.

### 1. Place and significance of the Decalogue in Luther's teaching.

In the previous chapter it appeared that the Decalogue had been in practical use in the Church since the 13th century, i.e. as speculum (mirror) in auricular confession. In the 15th century several regional synods urged the clergy to read the Ten Commandments together with the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria to the congregation gathered for worship. The Ten Commandments were treated in the religious literature of the late Middle Ages, and there is evidence that the Decalogue was explained in sermons as well. What then is the novelty introduced by Luther in relation to the Decalogue?

The instruction of ~~the~~ youth had been highly neglected in the Church of the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. As it was the task of the parents and sponsors to teach the children the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and later on the Decalogue; the priests confined themselves to the teaching of the grown-ups. When a child was old enough for auricular confession, the father confessor was able to ascertain whether the child was taught properly, i.e. whether it had learnt the Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart. If not, it had to do it before the next confession.

Luther first followed the tradition of the Church. In the years 1516-17 he preached to his congregation about the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. These sermons were published in Latin in the year 1518<sup>2</sup>, and in the same year appeared a short explanation of the Ten Commandments which was considered a paper of confession (Beichtzettel).

But Luther soon understood that the low standard of the people in

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1) see Melanchthon in Apol. Conf. VIII, 41: "Apud adversarios nulla prorsus est catechesis puerorum, de qua quidem praecipiant canones".

2) Decem praecepta Wittembergensi populo praedicata.



spiritual respect could only be improved by the assiduous instruction of the youth. Already in 1519 he published an interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and the Decalogue as a result of his own teaching of children and unlearned adults (*pueris et rudibus*)<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand Luther stresses the task of the housefather to teach his children and servants in the christian faith, but on the other hand he makes this instruction also the first concern of the Church. Consequently, in 1521, Agricola was appointed as "catechetes" in order to teach the children of Wittenberg<sup>2</sup>. It is this second point which may be considered as the main reformation of the "catechism"<sup>3</sup>. As to the ethical part of the catechism Luther, like Wolff<sup>4</sup> and possibly influenced by him, reduced the traditional parts of the "paper of confession" to the Ten Commandments<sup>5</sup>.

On the basis of the previous sermons Luther in 1520 published "Ein kurze Form der Zehn Gebote, des Glaubens, des Vaterunsers". In the introduction to this publication he reveals that he considers these three subjects the basis of christian instruction: "... in wilchen drey stucken fur war alles, was in der schrift stett und ymer gepredigt werden mag, auch alles, was eym Christen nott ist zu wissen, grundlich und uberflussig begriffen ist, und mit solche kurtz und leychte vorfasset, das niemant clagen noch sich entschuldigen kan, es sey zuvill oder zuschweer

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1) Ein kurze Form, das Paternoster zu verstehen und zu beten.

2) G. Kawerau, Agricola, p. 31

3) The word "catechism" is used in different senses in Church history and even by Luther himself:

- Augustine: catechismus = the instruction of pagans before baptism.
- Later, when adult baptism ceased, catechism meant the liturgical acts preceding baptism of the child, or more distinctly: the questioning of the child's sponsors before baptism, in distinction from exorcism applied to the child.
- Luther used the word Katechismus for
  - a) the oral instruction of people "was sie gleuben, thun, lassen und wissen sollen ym Christenthum" (WA 19,76.2ff)
  - b) the subject of this instruction
  - c) the book containing this instruction

4) see § 15.4

5) "Finitis praeceptis decem nunc reducenda sunt ad illa tam multa genera peccatorum, siquidem nullum est peccatum, nisi quod contra praeceptum sit dei." WA I.516

zu behalten, was yhm nodt ist zur selickeyt. Den drey dingk seyn nott eynem menschen zu wissen, das er selig werden muge: Das erst, das er wisse, was er thun und lassen soll. Zum andern, wen er nu sieht, das er es nit thun noch lassen kan auss seynen krefften, das er wisse, wo erss nehmen und suchen unnd finden soll, damit er dasselb thun und lassen muge. Zum drittenn, das er wisse, wie er es suchen und holen soll."<sup>1</sup>

This writing may be called the first catechism, though it did not yet use this name, and it became epochmaking for all the publications which ensued in the following years in different parts of Germany and Switzerland, with the aim of providing material for youth-instruction. However the Decalogue is still thought of as "Beichtspiegel". This is evident from Luther's treatment of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments which he does not explain, because according to him they do not belong to auricular confession<sup>2</sup>.

Luther is convinced that he is following the old tradition of the Church in combining these three subjects for the catechetical teaching. In the "Deutsche Messe" he explains: "Dise Unterricht odder unterwegsunge weys ich nicht schlechter noch besser zu stellen, denn sie bereyt ist gestellet von anfang der Christenheydt und bisher blieben, nemlich die drey stuck, die zehen gebot, der glaube und das vater unser"<sup>3</sup>. Similar statements are found in the introductions to both catechisms.

When finally in 1529<sup>4</sup> his two catechisms<sup>5</sup> appeared it was self-evident that they should contain in the first place an explanation of the Decalogue, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. These were followed by a fourth and fifth part, i.e. on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless Luther considered the first three parts as basic

1) WA 7,204.8ff

2) WA 7,211.24 ff

3) WA 19,76.7 ff

4) About the development between 1520 and 1529 see esp. Joh. Meyer, Luthers Kleiner Katechismus, p. 47 ff and Ferd. Cohrs, Die evangel. Katechismusversuche vor Luthers Enchiridion, Vol. 4 p. 246 ff.

5) Grosser Katechismus and Enchiridion or Kleiner Katechismus

(Hauptstück) of his catechism. He even conceived of a relation between these three parts and the divine Trinity: "Decalogum Deus ipse dedit, Christus ipsemet orationis dominicae formam praescripsit, Spiritus sanctus symbolum exactissime exposuit"<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The form of the Decalogue used in Luther's Catechisms.

1. Du solt kein andere Götter haben neben mir.
2. Du solt den namen Gottes nicht vergeblich führen.
3. Du solt den feyertag heiligen.
4. Du solt vater und mutter ehren.
5. Du solt nicht tödten.
6. Du solt nicht ehebrechen.
7. Du solt nicht stelen.
8. Du solt kein falsch zeugnis reden widder deinen nehisten.
9. Du solt nicht begeren deines nehisten haus.
10. Du solt nicht begeren seines weibs, knecht, magd, viech odder was sein ist.<sup>2</sup>

If we compare the Ten Commandments in Luther's Catechisms with the texts of Ex. 20 and Dt. 5 we notice considerable differences, especially in the Small Catechism. The introduction to the Decalogue is dropped<sup>3</sup>, the second commandment<sup>4</sup> is omitted, whereas the statement about the jealous God<sup>5</sup> is put at the end of the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. In the second commandment<sup>6</sup> the threat is omitted, and the same happens with the promise following the fourth commandment<sup>7</sup>. In the third commandment the original word "Sabbat" is changed into "feiertag" and the 3 verses giving the reason of the precept are omitted.

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1) WA Tischreden 3,685

2) WA 30/I 130

3) according to Aland (Der Text des Kleinen Katechismus in der Gegenwart, p. 54) it was added in 1531, according to Reu (D.M. Luthers Kleiner Katechismus, p.39) only after 1546.

4) according to Reformed numbering      5) Ex. 20,5b-6

6) according to Luther's numbering

7) The promise is added only in 1540 (Reu, op.cit. p.35)

As a matter of fact in the Church of the Middle Ages there already existed several abbreviated texts of the Decalogue. Such short forms were intended to facilitate the memorizing of the Ten Commandments<sup>1</sup>. If Luther himself chose a short form this is probably not so much evidence of his dependence on tradition as of his theological conviction regarding the validity of the Ten Commandments<sup>2</sup>. In order to understand Luther's liberty with regard to the biblical text of the Decalogue we have thus to consider the reformer's attitude to the Old Testament Law as a whole.

### 3. Luther's conception of the Old Testament Law<sup>3</sup>.

According to Luther God has spoken twice directly from heaven to man: the first time, when he gave the people of Israel the Law at Mount Sinai, the second, when the Holy Spirit at Pentecost caused the apostles to preach the Gospel. The first of these two preachings and teachings contains God's Law which tells man what he has to do, the second consists of the Gospel, the proclamation of what God has done for man. These two teachings should not be confused because they are different and separated from each other as God is separated from man.

The law of Moses has exclusively to do with the Jews and concerns neither the pagans nor the Christians. That the Decalogue is not binding for pagans is evident from its introduction, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt". It is only the Jews who have been liberated from Egypt and nobody else. Consequently the following commandments apply to the Jews alone.<sup>4</sup>

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1) see Meyer, op.cit. p. 85 ff.

2) cf. W. Dress, Die Zehn Gebote und der Dekalog, ThLZ 1954 Nr.7/8 Sp.415-422, esp. Sp.417: "Luther wusste in diesem Fall recht genau, was er tat, hatte er doch nicht nur den Urtext des Dekalogs ins Deutsche übertragen, sondern z.B. auch das Buch Exodus als solches in Predigten ausgelegt."

3) The following survey is based mainly on two writings by Luther, i.e. "Ein Unterrichtung, wie sich die Christen in Mose sollen schicken" (WA 24,1 ff; 16,363 ff) and "Predigten über den Dekalog" (WA 16,421 ff)

4) "Zum Ersten ist zu mercken, das uns Heyden und Christen die Zehen gepot nicht betreffen, sondern alleine die Jüden. Das bezeuget und

The abrogation of the Sabbath day by Paul and in the New Testament is further evidence that the Mosaic Law was no longer valid for Christians. As Paul says, whoever submits himself to one part of the Law is bound to keep the whole law.<sup>1</sup> As for Christians, "kein pünctlin geht uns an ym Mose"<sup>2</sup>, therefore "Lade Mosen den Heyden und Christen nicht auff den hals, denn yhm neuen Testament hat er ein end und gilt nichts mehr mit seinen gesetzen, er mus sich für Christo verkriechen."<sup>3</sup> Luther radically repudiates the scholastic distinction of ceremonial, judicial and moral law in the Old Testament with the intention of giving the latter a permanent validity<sup>4</sup>.

Why then does Luther not put away the Old Testament, why does he "preach Moses"? Because there are three things in it which are useful for us:

- a) Though the commandments of the Old Testament are given to Israel and therefore are not obligatory for us (die gesetze sind tod und abe<sup>5</sup>), nevertheless the law contains a great deal of valuable regulations which may be elicited and inserted in the legislation of one's country<sup>6</sup>. Luther considers the Mosaic law better than the Roman law because it aims at the welfare of the whole community<sup>7</sup>.

But what about the basic commandments of the Decalogue? Are they not to be observed by the non-Jews? Luther answers: nature possesses these laws too. They are written in the hearts of the pagans as Paul testifies<sup>8</sup>. So in the Decalogue God has not commanded anything

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zwinget der Text, so er spricht: Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott..."  
WA 16,424.

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1) Gal. 5,3   | 2) WA 24,8                  |
| 3) WA 16,431.12   | 4) WA 40 I 242; 329; 671-72 |
| 5) WA 24,8  |                             |
| 6) "Die Heyden sind dem Mose nicht schuldig gehorsam zu seyn. Moses ist der Jüden Sachssenspiegel. Wenn aber also ein fein Exempel zum regiment daraus genomen würde, möchte man das selbige halten ungewungen, als lang man wollte." WA 24,9 |                             |
| 7) WA 14,591  |                             |
| 8) "Das aber wir Heyden ein gesetz haben, das leret uns unser eigen gewissen und vernunft, wie auch Paulus zun Römern am Ersten spricht." WA 16,431.  |                             |

new. The only difference between Jews and pagans regarding such precepts is that God, who had already written his commandments in the human heart, moreover (zum uberflus) proclaimed them orally and in writing to his chosen people. If we as Christians keep certain commandments which were promulgated by Moses it is not because of Moses' authorship, but because these precepts are ingrafted in us by nature and Moses here is in accordance with nature<sup>1</sup>. Only if a commandment of the Old Testament is in agreement with the New Testament and with the law of nature is it binding for Christians<sup>2</sup>. The other commandments which are not ingrafted by nature are not relevant for pagans; though some of them may be obeyed if considered convenient (i.e. tithe, year of jubilee, levirath)<sup>3</sup>.

- b) Secondly we find in Moses something which is not given by nature, i.e. God's promises pointing to the incarnation of his Son. These promises have nothing to do with the law, they do not demand anything from man, but come down from heaven as Gospel which may be received by us. This is the principal subject in Moses and it is especially because of these comforting and good promises that we read the Old Testament.
- c) In the third place, the Old Testament contains a vast collection of examples how we are to love God and to trust in him, and conversely we are aware of God's punishments of people who do not believe and are disobedient to God. Nowhere are such good examples of faith and unbelief as in Moses, therefore he ought not to be put aside.

The basic error of the "Schwärmer" consists in their lack of discriminating the addressees of God's word. It is not enough to ask whether a command-

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- 1) "... das sie mir von natur eingepflantzet sind und Moses allhie gleich mit der natur uberein stymmet". WA 24,10
  - 2) WA 24,7. cf. 13,ff: "Mosen wollen wir halten für einen lerer, aber für unsern gesetzgeber wollen wir yhn nicht halten, Es sey denn das er gleich stymme mit dem newen Testament und dem natürlichen gesetze."
  - 3) the subject of natural law is treated more detailed in the following section.



ment is spoken by God, but we have to consider to whom it is said. If God told Abraham to kill his son and Noah to build an ark, these commandments do in no way apply to us. The question is therefore not whether a commandment originates from God, but whether it is addressed to me or not.<sup>1</sup> What is said to the Jews is not said to the Christians<sup>2</sup>. If a preacher wants to force you to keep the law of Moses, just ask him whether you have been brought out of Egypt under Moses! If he denies this, tell him that Moses does not concern you because he speaks to the people who were led out of Egypt<sup>3</sup>. We Christians have the Gospel which according to Jesus' words has to be preached not only to the Jews, but to the whole of creation.

#### 4. The Decalogue, summary of God's Law, equivalent to the natural law.

In the previous section we have already mentioned that for Luther the Old Testament laws are only relevant for us as far as they agree with the natural law which is engrafted by God in the human heart. Now for Luther it is the Ten Commandments which contain a perfect summary of this natural law<sup>4</sup>.

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- 1) "Lieber herr, setzet die brillen auff die nasen und sehet den Text recht an... Man mus einen unterscheid machen zwischen dem wort Gottes und wort Gottes. Darauff soll ich achtung haben, wenn Gott etwas redet, ob das selbe mich betreffe." WA 16,437
  - 2) "Den Mosen und sein volck las bey einander, es ist mit yhnen aus, er gehet mich nicht an, ich höre das Wort, das mich betrifft." WA 24,13.
  - 3) WA 16,429, cf. 50,331.20 ff.
  - 4) except the prohibition of images which belongs to the ceremonial law of the Jews and is consequently dropped in Luther's Decalogue. The commandment of Sabbath observance is considered only partly as *lex naturae*. See Joh. Meyer, op.cit. p. 207 f.
- WA 18,81: "Warumb hellet und leret man denn die zehen gepot? Antwort: Darumb, das die naturlichen Gesetze nyrgent so feyn und ordenlich sind verfasst als ynn Mose. Drumb nympt man billich das exempel von Mose."
- WA 50,330.31 ff: "Wenn die Zehen gebot sollen Moses gesetz heissen, so ist Moses viel zu langsam (= spät) komen, auch viel zu wenig leute fur sich genomen, weil die zehen gebot nicht allein vor Mose, sondern auch vor Abraham und allen Patriarchen auch uber die gantze welt



As we have seen earlier, the tracing back of the ethical teaching to the Decalogue has already been attempted in the 15th century. Luther's consistency in this matter has a peculiar reason: by binding all ethical instruction to the Decalogue he bases Christian obedience exclusively on God's word and repudiates every action outside this realm as "human thoughts"<sup>1</sup>. The scholastic distinction between 'mandata' (for everybody) and 'consilia evangelica' (for the few) is pointedly rejected by this declaration of the Decalogue as the highest and comprehensive revelation of God's will. The Decalogue is the highest doctrine, and Luther cannot conceive of another teaching which could be superior to the Ten Commandments<sup>2</sup>. Even Christ has not brought a new law which supersedes the Decalogue, because it is not possible to promulgate anything which stands above the Law of Moses<sup>3</sup>.

Luther considers the second table an exposition of the commandment "to love your neighbour as yourself" and of the Golden Rule<sup>4</sup>. Consequently these are also conceived of as "natural law"<sup>5</sup>. It seems that Luther equates the commandment of love with the *lex naturalis* primarily in order to reveal man's responsibility and guilt. The authority

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1) cf. WA 9,9.12; 178; 30 I 44.

2) WA 14,607.24; 40 II 246.8; 247.12; 30 I 179.24; 182,8 ff

3) WA 40 I 15.25

4) Mt. 7,12

5) "Nun thustu wyder die natur und yr gesetz, das do spricht: was du wilt, das man dir thu, das thu du auch den andern." WA 2,120.22. "Denn die natur leret, wie die liebe thut, das ich thun soll, was ich myr wolllt gethan haben." WA 11,279.19. cf. WA 17 II 102.6 ff. 37; 34 II 172.1.

Concerning Luther's identifying the *lex naturae* with the commandment of love see H.M. Müller, *Das christliche Liebesgebot und die lex naturae*, ZThK 1928 p. 178 ff. cf.

E. Wolf, *Gottesrecht und Menschenrecht*, ThEx NF 42 p. 20 ff.

do. Zur Frage des Naturrechts bei Thomas von Aquin und bei

Luther, in *Peregrinatio*, p. 201 ff.

For Luther's conception of 'natural law' see E. Wolf's statement (Zur Frage des Naturrechts... p. 193): "So erscheint das Naturrecht bei Luther bald als Vernunftrecht, bald als natürliche Billigkeit,



potten, büchern, schwerd und gewalt weren und zu ruck treyben, und yhn solchs seynes natürliche liechts erylern und seyn eygen hertz ihm für die augen stellen."<sup>1</sup> In this and many similar sayings it seems as if the knowledge of God's will were really present in man's heart as a "clear command of reason", but there are other sayings which definitely deny such a knowledge: "Die ersten drei Gebot Gottes sind der Vernunft gar unbekannt; die ander Tafel hat ein wenig ein Ansehen bei ihr, also dass derselben Uebertreter und Uebelthäter bisweilen gestraffet werden. Aber die, so wider die letzten zwei Gebot thun, dieselben hält die Welt nicht dafür, dass sie sündigen und misshandeln."<sup>2</sup> "Aus unser Natur und durch unser Industriam erkennen wir Gott nimmermehr, aber aus den göttlichen Wohlthaten und andern Werken, als der Menschwerdung Christi, erkennen wir Gott."<sup>3</sup>

At times Luther goes even further. Reason does not only show a lack of knowledge of God's will, but it even reveals a tendency quite opposed to Christ's teaching. The opposition between Christ and reason appears for instance very sharply in Luther's interpretation of the conception *τὸ μεγαλειότης* (magnanimity, forbearance, Phil. 4,5). Luther acknowledges that there is a natural magnanimity, but only towards certain people; solely the Holy Spirit teaches to show magnanimity to all. "Also ist die vernunftige und natürliche lindigkeit linde gegen die reychen, grossen, frembden und freund, und nicht gegen alle menschen. darumb ist sie falsch, eyttel erlogen, gleysserey und lautter bloss-tuckerey und eyn gauckelwerck für Gott. Darumb sihe tzu, wie unmöglich es der natur sey, disse rundte und geystliche lindigkeit halten, unnd wie wenig leutt solches gesprechens gewar werden... und lassen sich duncken, sie thun wol und recht, das sie etlichen menschen ungelinde sind. Denn also leret die rotzige, unflechtige natur, mit yhrer hubschen vernunft, die alletzeyt widder den geist unnd was des geysts

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1) WA 17 II 102

2) Tischreden, Erl. Ausg. Bd. 58 p. 265 Nr. 812.

3) ib. p. 268 Nr. 816



ist, ertttert und handelt." <sup>1</sup> With regard to statements like this it is - to say the least - precarious to contend that for Luther the Decalogue and the New Testament teaching are identical with natural law <sup>2</sup>. Though many sayings of Luther point in this direction, nevertheless in his practical teaching the exhortations are based on the Gospel and often are at variance with reason <sup>3</sup>.

We may say that for Luther the reason (Vernunft) had only value and was used by him as an argument as far as it agrees with Christ's teaching. By and in itself it is highly equivocal, not only because it is obscure, but also because it can be in opposition to the Spirit <sup>4</sup>. This consideration is also relevant for Luther's conception of the Decalogue.

We have mentioned before that the commandments of the Old Testament apply for Christians only as far as they agree with the New Testament and the law of nature. But in his interpretation of the Decalogue it is clear that Luther is led neither by his "natural light" nor by a limited Old Testament understanding. A statement in the thesis "de fide" <sup>5</sup> is very interesting in this respect. Luther asserts that

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1) WA 10 I 2,180.10

2) So for instance Seeberg, Luthers Theologie II p. 214: "Im letzten Grund ist Luther davon überzeugt, dass die übliche Scheidung von geschriebenem Gesetz, Naturgesetz und Evangelium irrig ist. Auch das Evangelium predigt die Nächstenliebe, die im Sinn der "goldenen Regel" auch das Naturgesetz und ebenso das Gesetz des Moses verkündigt."

3) see esp. Heintze, op.cit. Chapter VII: Luthers Predigt über die Bergpredigt und über das doppelte Liebesgebot, p. 147 ff.

4) cf. Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze I p. 247: "Wo Luther sich auf die "Vernunft" oder auf das "Gesetz der Natur" als schlechthin massgebend beruft, denkt er in Wahrheit immer an die christlich bestimmte Vernunft, noch einfacher gesagt an das christliche Liebesgebot. Tatsächlich nimmt er auch da, wo er das Liebesgebot "Vernunft" nennt, dieses Gebot in der ganzen Strenge, in der er es sonst aufzufassen gewohnt war. Er drückt durch die Vereinerleung mit dem Naturgesetz nicht die christliche Sittlichkeit auf ein bescheidenes Mass herab, sondern deutet umgekehrt die Aussage des natürlichen Gewissens ins Christliche hinauf."

5) 1535: WA 39 I 44 ff.



a perfect Christian would be able to draw up new Decalogues, as Paul and Peter did in the Epistles, but especially Christ himself in the Gospel. These Decalogues are clearer than the Decalogue of Moses, just as the appearance of Christ is clearer than the appearance of Moses<sup>1</sup>. But as we are unsteady in spirit it is necessary to keep to certain orders and writings of the apostles. Here Luther contrasts the New Testament commandments and exhortations with the Decalogue, attributing to the first a much higher place. If thus Luther generally praises the Decalogue as the unparalleled revelation of God's will he obviously projects the "new and clearer Decalogues" of the New Testament into the old one. The Ten Commandments become as it were the form which is filled with a new content.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Law and Gospel in Luther's theology.

### a) The problem.

Before we can investigate the function of the Decalogue in Luther's catechetical instruction we have to consider his conception of Law and Gospel. It is of course not possible to treat this subject thoroughly within the present frame. In recent times several books<sup>3</sup> and many

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- 1) 52. Habito enim Christo facile condemus leges, et omnia recte iudicabimus.  
 53. Imo novos Decalogos faciemus, sicut Paulus facit per omnes Epistolas, et Petrus, maxime Christus in Euangelio.  
 54. Et hi Decalogi clariores sunt, quam Mosi decalogus, sicut facies Christi clarior est, quam facies Mosi.
  - 2) cf. Holl, op.cit. p. 248 n.4: "Und doch erweist es jede beliebige Auslegung des Dekalogs im Luthertum - ich lasse mir für Luther am Kleinen Katechismus genügen - , dass hier nicht die Bergpredigt zum Dekalog heruntergedeutet, sondern umgekehrt der Dekalog in die Bergpredigt hinaufgedeutet wird."
  - 3) e.g. Bridston, Keith R., Law and Gospel and their Relationship in the Theology of Luther, Thesis Edinburgh 1949 (typescript)  
 Gerdes, Hayo, Luthers Streit mit den Schwärmern um das rechte Verständnis des Gesetzes Mose, Göttingen 1955.

articles have been written on this matter. Nevertheless it is impossible simply to give a summary of the current interpretation of Luther's view, because the Lutheran scholars vary greatly in their interpretation of Luther's theology, especially concerning the question of Law and Gospel<sup>1</sup>.

If we ask why Luther's theology can be understood and interpreted so differently, several points may be mentioned:

Joest Wilfried, Gesetz und Freiheit, Das Problem des tertius usus legis bei Luther und die Neutestamentliche Parainese, Göttingen 1955

Heintze Gerhard, Luthers Predigt von Gesetz und Evangelium, München 1958

Schloemann Martin, Natürliches und gepredigtes Gesetz bei Luther, Eine Studie zur Frage nach der Einheit der Gesetzesauffassung Luthers mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Auseinandersetzung mit den Antinomern, Berlin 1961

- 1) For a survey of the discussion and the different attitudes see Heintze, op.cit. p. 11-29.

If we take into account the highly controversial opinions between Lutheran scholars concerning the interpretation of Luther's theology it seems almost a hopeless venture for a non-lutheran student to deal with the delicate subject of "Law and Gospel in Luther's theology" on a few pages only. But as the use made of the Decalogue by the Reformer can only be understood against the background of Luther's doctrine of Law and Gospel we are compelled to face this subtle question.

The present paragraph is however not more than a modest attempt to understand the Reformer's position, and it is to be hoped that within a reasonable space of time the Lutheran scholars will come to an agreement as to the genuine meaning of their master's teaching, so that people who are not so conversant with the many writings and sayings of the Reformer will nevertheless be able to know what his conception of Law and Gospel really was.

- 1) There is a certain development in Luther's theology. Though in recent times the scholars lay more stress on the continuity, nevertheless different stages can be discerned even if we speak only of changes in accents.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) In close connexion with the first is a second reason: Luther adapted his preaching very strongly to his listeners and their respective situations. The great bulk of ungodly people in Wittenberg causes the question whether he should not preach exclusively the Law in its acuteness and reserve the Gospel for the faithful<sup>2</sup>. A definite change in his preaching according to the changed circumstances appears in his discussion with the Antinomians.<sup>3</sup>
- 3) A counterpoise to the influence of the circumstances upon Luther is established by his faithfulness to the biblical text (Textgebundenheit). He does not impose a certain concept upon the text, but endeavours to give a real interpretation of what is said in it.<sup>4</sup> Luther's words therefore have to be considered in relation to the text he is interpreting. The neglect of this requisite provides another source of misunderstanding<sup>5</sup>.
- 4) Point three, i.e. Luther's clinging to the biblical text and message, causes a certain inconsistency between his theoretical-paedagogical programme and his actual teaching and preaching.

With these factors in mind we shall try to consider the main lines in Luther's theology with regard to Law and Gospel.

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- 1) Schloemann, op.cit. p. 20-23 mentions a development in Luther's use of the term law and blames J. Heckel (Lex charitatis, München 1953) for not taking into account this change and thus giving an inaccurate interpretation of Luther's doctrine of the Law. See esp. notes 77 and 79. In Luther's doctrine of the usus legis Schloemann distinguishes four stages, see p. 24 ff.
  - 2) see Heintze, op. cit. p. 61 ff.
  - 3) see below page 342 f.
  - 4) cf. Heintze, op.cit. p. 50 ff.
  - 5) Heintze op.cit. p.52: "Es gibt in der Regel ein falsches Bild, wenn Zitate aus Predigten oder Vorlesungen als isolierte 'dicta probantia' benutzt werden, ohne das Verhältnis des Zitats zu dem jeweils behandelten Text zu berücksichtigen."

b) The different functions of Law and Gospel.

Luther's main concern is that Law and Gospel should not be confused. Though both are words of God, no unity or even co-existence between them is possible. "Christus et Lex nullo modo possunt simul convenire et dominari in conscientia".<sup>1</sup> In this respect we have to do with a strict "either-or": "Aut enim Christus stabit et Lex peribit, aut Lex stabit et Christus peribit".<sup>2</sup> Christ is not a new legislator<sup>3</sup> who after the abrogation of the old Law brings a new one, but he is "propiator" and "salvator".<sup>4</sup>

The absolute difference between the two Words of God, the Law and the Gospel, is evident in their attitudes towards man: "Das Gesetz gebeut und foddert von uns was wir thuen sollen, ist allein auff unser thuen gericht und stehet ym foddern, denn Gott spricht durch das gesetz: das thue, das lasse, das wil ich von dir haben. Das Euangelion aber prediget nicht, was wir thuen odder lassen sollen, foddert nichts von uns, sondern wendet es umb, thut das widderspiel und saget nicht: thue dis, thue das, sondern heyst uns nur die schos herhalten und nemen und spricht: Sihe, liber mensch, das hat dir Gott gethan."

Luther's conception of Law over against the Gospel does not concern God's will in itself, as it were, the content of God's will, its substance, but his will as put before man in form of the law. "Quandoque loquimur de lege, non loquimur de vacua lege... ut angeli de ea loqui possunt... sed de lege accusante, reos agente, et exactrice."<sup>6</sup> If man is confronted with God's law, his sins are revealed and he experiences God's curse: "Lex... in suo vero usu... revelat peccatum, efficit iram, accusat, perterrefacit..."<sup>7</sup> Moreover the Law augments and incites sin as Paul testifies in Rom. 7.<sup>8</sup>

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1) in epist. Gal. WA 40 I 114.14 ff.

2) ib. 114.13 f.

3) ib. 298.14

4) ib. 232.29 f.

5) WA 24,4.8 ff.

6) WA 39 I 434.1 ff.

7) WA 40 I 486.14 f.

8) ib. 487.25 f.

This function of the Law is most important, because if man's sins are not revealed, he thinks himself just and holy. Luther calls this self-conceit the false religion, "pestis vulgatissima orbis terrarum".<sup>1</sup> So God uses the law to kill us (in this false religion) in order to give life. "(Lex) non ergo simpliciter occidit, sed ad vitam occidit."<sup>2</sup> At this point, and only here, appears the inner relation between Law and Gospel: "Ista ergo duo contraria coniugenda sunt, quae re ipsa diversissima sunt."<sup>3</sup>

Here is then the function of the Gospel. Man who is frightened and desperate because of God's anger is told that God by sheer grace bestows His righteousness upon him, a righteousness which can never be attained by means of the Law. "Das erst ist das gesetz Gottes, wilchs soll also gepredigt werden, das man die sunde dadurch offenbare und erkennen lerne, Roma 3 und 7... Denn dis heyst das gesetz recht geystlich gepredigt, wie Paulus Ro. 7 und recht gebraucht 1 Timo 1 sagt. Das ander, wenn nu die sunde erkennet und das gesetz also gepredigt ist, damit die gewissen erschreckt und gedemütigt werden fur Gottes zorn, soll man darnach das tröstlich Wort des Euangelion und vergebung der sunden predigen, die gewissen widder zu trösten und auff zu richten zur gnade Gottes etc. " <sup>4</sup>

So the law has to precede the Gospel and to prepare the way for God's gift. If the preaching of the law were neglected (Antinomians), God's grace in the Gospel could not be understood properly. But the most serious mistake would be the mixing up of Law and Gospel and making Christ a Lawgiver (Roman Church).

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1) WA 40 I 517.31 ff.

2) ib. 529.14

3) ib. 523.12; cf. 520.25 ff.

4) WA 18,65.9 ff.

c) The double use of the Law.

Luther distinguishes two uses of the law (*duplex usus legis*). This distinction is given a final formulation in his lectures on Galatians in 1531.<sup>1</sup> The first use is called Usus Civilis. Here we have to do not only with the law of the state, but also with the laws and customs of society. This law is given in order to prevent crimes and insubordinations of every kind. The observance of this law does not justify man; the many precepts are rather evidence of man's injustice and wickedness which makes them necessary. Man obeys out of fear. Nevertheless these "civil restrictions", instituted by God himself, are very important, as they not only preserve public order and peace, but especially prevent the course of the Gospel from being hindered by the impious. The second use is the Usus Theologicus or Spiritualis or Sanctus. This is the principal and proper function of the Law as depicted in Rom. 7. "Itaque verum officium et principalis ac proprius usus legis est, quod revelat homini suum peccatum, caecitatem, miseriam, impietatem, ignorantiam, odium, contemptum Dei, mortem, infernum, iudicium et commeritam iram apud Deum."<sup>2</sup> The law commands the doing of something and as man has not done it he is accused by the law and declared guilty and has to await eternal death. Man is like the Israelites at Mount Sinai: the Jews had sanctified themselves and considered themselves holy, but when the law was promulgated under lightning, thunder and sounds of trumpets, the people were terrified and could no longer stand and listen to God's voice. Such a light is the law, not showing God's grace nor righteousness or life, but solely God's wrath, death, condemnation and hell.

Luther repudiates the accusation of adversaries that he rejected the law. "We do not reject the law, on the contrary we greatly uphold the law, but in its proper use, namely: *primum ad coercendas civiles*

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1) WA 40 I 479 f.

2) ib. 481.13 ff.



transgressionones, deinde ad revelandas spirituales transgressionones."<sup>1</sup>

d) The continuous function of the Law.

"We have already stated that for Luther Law and Gospel stand in strict opposition. He who is in Christ is no longer under the Law. The "Thou shalt" of the Law is now not necessary, because it has fulfilled its task, i.e. it has led the sinner to the knowledge of sin and reception of God's grace. In regard to good deeds the faithful need not be confronted with God's will coming to him from outside in the form of the Law. His own will is identical with God's will. What the Law had demanded is done by faith spontaneously. Luther contends "das einn Christen mensch in diessen glauben lebend nit darff eines lerers guter werck, sondern was ym furkumpt, das thut er, und ist alles wolgethan."<sup>2</sup> Through the spirit and faith he has received a nature which does the good, more than he can be taught by all the commandments.<sup>3</sup> The Law is given for the unjust who are not Christians.

But, and now appears the reason for the continuous function of the Law, even for Christians: "Nu aber keyn mensch von natur Christen odder frum ist, sondern allzumal sunder und böse sind, weret yhnen allen Gott durchs Gesetz."<sup>4</sup> Luther is aware of the paradoxical nature of these statements. On the one hand the Christian is free from the Law and does God's will spontaneously, on the other he is still under the Law. Why is that so? Luther answers with a counterquestion: "Quomodo in Christo iustificati non sunt peccatores et tamen sunt peccatores? Simul ergo iustus, simul peccator. Quis solvet has diversas contra se facies? aut in quo convenient?"<sup>5</sup>

1) WA 40 I 485.25 ff.

2) WA 6,207.3 ff.

3) "Eyn gutter baum darff keyner leere noch rechts, das er gutte frucht trage, sondern seyn natur gibts, das er on alles recht und lere tregt, wie seyn art ist. Dennes sollt mir gar ein nerrischer mensch seyn, der eym apffel baum eyn buch machte voll gesetz un rechts, wie er sollt epffel und nicht dornen tragen, sso er dasselb besser von...."

see p.

4) WA 11,250.24 ff

5) WA 2,496.37 ff; 497.1; 497.13

Here we have thus the important statement for the understanding of Luther's anthropology: man is simul iustus ac peccator, at the same time righteous and sinner. No compromise or equalisation are possible between these two statements. The Christians are totally righteous and totally sinners.<sup>1</sup> The explanation of this contradiction lies in the different points of view.<sup>2</sup> Reputative totaliter iusti - revera totaliter peccatores<sup>3</sup>, or, as Luther puts it elsewhere in the same dispute against the Antinomians: "Quoad Christum... sumus vere sancti, mundi et iusti... quod ad me et carnem meam, sum peccator."<sup>4</sup>

To this double state of the Christian corresponds a double relation to the Law. If Paul says that "the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient"<sup>5</sup> Luther agrees and adds that there are always lawless people in the Church and that even the faithful are partly lawless. Hence inasmuch a Christian is just the law is abrogated, inasmuch he is sinner the Law remains. "Lex itaque posita et non posita."<sup>6</sup>

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eygener art thut, denn ers mit allen Büchern beschreyben und gepieten kan. Also sind alle Christen durch den geyst und glawben aller ding genaturt, das sie wol und recht thun mehr denn man sie mit allen gesetzen leren kan, und dürfen fur sich selbst keyns gesetzs noch rechts." WA 11,250.13 ff.

- 1) Joest (op.cit. p.57) calls this consideration the "Total-Aspekt des Simul".
- 2) "diverso respectu dicimur iusti et peccatores simul et semel". WA 39 I 564.6.
- 3) WA 39 I 564.3 ff.
- 4) WA 39 I 552.13 ff; cf. 492,20!
- 5) 1 Tim. 1,9
- 6) WA 39 I 552.11; cf. 522.5 ff.  
see further WA 17 I 133.30 ff: "Also teile ein Christen ynn zwey stück, das er zugleich gerecht und ungerecht ist. Der heilige geist wönet im hertzen, aber nicht im fleisch, da wönet der Teuffel mit seinem samen. So mus ein mensch auff erden leben, das er auswendig mit dem gesetz gedrungen und gezwungen werde, das er nicht böses thu, aber nach dem geist ungezwungen bleibe, denn er von yhm selbs gutes thuet, Das weret so lange, bis er stirbt."

As the Christian in this life never becomes just in himself, the law has the continuous function of preventing a false security and urging man to pray, to hunger and thirst for the Spirit and for God's grace. Christian life is not depicted as a progress from sin to holiness, but as a repeated transition from the self which is revealed a sinner by the law, to Christ who is our righteousness and sanctification.

Besides this conception of the "simul" as "totus iustus - totus peccator" there is another line in Luther's theology. He acknowledges a certain progress in Christian life, a mortification of the flesh. The sick man is gradually recovering, faith is fighting against sin.<sup>1</sup> "Fide nondum perfecte sumus sani, sed sanandi. Samaritanus coepit sanare eum, qui in latrones ceciderat."<sup>2</sup> The Christian is partly ill and partly healthy, and there is a steady fight against sin. "Exercemus deinde nos ad pietatem et vitamus peccata, quantum possumus."<sup>3</sup> After justification we do good works which confirm our vocation and election, though we cannot keep the law perfectly because we have only the first-fruits (primitia) of the Spirit and the remnants of sin are still in us.<sup>4</sup>

### 3) The Law as tutor.<sup>5</sup>

Luther's interpretation of Gal. 3,23-24 is significant for our investigation. First he shows the terrors of the law which however are not intended to go on forever, but last only until the coming of Christ. With strong words Luther depicts the effects of Christ's coming on the Law. Christ really abrogated the whole law (verissime totam legem sustulit, legem abrogavit) so that we are no longer under this custodian but act safely and joyfully under Christ who with his Spirit gently governs in us. Where the Lord is, there is freedom. If we should

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1) Joest (op.cit. p. 65 ff) calls this the "Partial-Aspekt des Simul."

2) WA 39 I 376.6 f.

3) WA 40 I 574.21 f.

4) WA 40 I 407.33 ff.

5) WA 40 I 518-538

apprehend Christ perfectly, that tutor (the law) would have no further right in us. But just here lies the snag. We cannot apprehend Christ perfectly because sin inheres in our flesh as long as we live. So we are partly free and partly under the law.<sup>1</sup> As to conscience, we are free from the law and are not stirred by the tutor, but look to Christ crucified who took away all the offices of the law from our conscience. As to the remaining sin in our flesh we are still under the law, under this tutor who frightens and saddens the conscience by revealing sins and threatening death.

We have here a parallel to the paradox statement "simul iustus ac peccator". Paul distinguishes a time of law and a time of grace. These two times according to Luther, as opposite to each other as they may be, are joined in the heart.<sup>2</sup> So the Christian is divided in two times.<sup>3</sup> Of course these times are not equivalent. The time of the law has its end in Christ, the time of grace is eternal. Neither may we conceive a static relationship of these two times. As Christ has come once in order to free the world from the tyrannical government of the tutor, so he spiritually comes daily to us and works that we may grow in faith and knowledge, and the conscience apprehends him more perfectly from day to day, whereas the law of flesh and sin may diminish more and more. But as the flesh is not without sin as long as we live, the law has to fulfil its office, in some people more, in others less.<sup>4</sup>

In his interpretation of this text Luther depicts the function of the Law with regard to three kinds of people: those who are not to be justified (non justificandi), those who are to be justified (justi-

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1) "Quod ad nos attinet, partim liber a lege partim sub lege sumus" as Paul testifies in Rom. 7,21; WA 40 I 536.11.

2) "Quamquam enim distinctissima sunt illa duo, tamen etiam coniunctissima sunt etiam in eodem corde. Nihil magis coniunctum est quam timor et fiducia, Lex et Evangelium, peccatum et gratia; tam coniuncta enim sunt, ut alterum ab altero absorbeatur. Ideo nulla Mathematica coniunctio potest dari quae esset huic similis." WA 40 I 527.23 ff.

3) "Christianus divisus est in duo tempora." WA 40 I 526.21

4) WA 40 I 536.37

ficandi) and the just (iustificati). The first group (non iustificandi) experiences only the first use of the Law (usus civilis) which never ceases. The second group (iustificandi) is trained in the theological use of the Law which is not without end but tends to the future faith and coming Christ. When Paul speaks about the spiritual use of the Law he alludes to the iustificandi, not to the iustificati; because the just are far beyond and above every law.<sup>1</sup> What does the Law do in those who are justified in Christ? asks Luther later on<sup>2</sup>, and he answers with Paul: we are no longer under the tutor, he has nothing at all to do with us. But then follows the modification: this applies only as far as we apprehend Christ (see above).

It is important to keep in mind this differentiation between three kinds of people with their respective relation to the Law, because this explains the different accentuation in Luther's writings and sermons according to the circumstances.

#### f) Tertius usus legis?

We have to inquire now more precisely about the function of the law for the progress in Christian life mentioned above. It is widely acknowledged that Luther did not teach a third use of the Law.<sup>3</sup> The only place where we find three uses of the Law<sup>4</sup>, sc. the "usus didacticus" in the third place, has been proved as an insertion from the Loci of Melanchthon.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless it might be possible that Luther conceived of a positive use of the Law for the Christian, though he does not state it expressly nor present it systematically. There are still quite divergent views among Lutheran scholars concerning this matter.

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1) "Iustificati... longe extra et supra omnem legem sunt."  
WA 40 I 528.16.

2) WA 40 I 534.30

3) see Gerh. Ebeling, Zur Lehre vom triplex usus legis in der reformatorischen Theologie, ThLZ 75 1950 Sp. 235ff.

4) WA 39 I 485.16 ff.

5) W. Elert, Eine theologische Fälschung zur Lehre vom Tertius usus legis, Zeitschr. f. Relig.- u. Geistesgeschichte 1948 H. 2 p. 168 ff.

Conclusions like those of Gerdes Hayo<sup>1</sup> may be in agreement with Luther's theoretical programme, but they cannot be reconciled with the reformer's practice<sup>2</sup>. Joest<sup>3</sup> formulates his opinion very cautiously: "Es gibt eine Reihe von Aussagen, die sachlich auf den usus didacticus hinzudeuten scheinen."<sup>4</sup> An analysis of pertinent sayings of Luther leads him to the following conclusion: Luther knows a function of the "law" which gives direction to the faithful which can and should be obeyed. When considered in this function, the Law is often not called "lex", but "observationes", "remedia", "exhortationes".<sup>5</sup> On the whole Heintze agrees with Joest and speaks also of a "usus practicus evangelii" (instead of "tertius usus legis") which has a very significant place in Luther's sermons.<sup>6</sup>

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- 1) op.cit. p. 112-13: "Der tertius usus legis würde bei Luther auf den usus civilis sich zurückführen, einfach, weil die Frommen noch nicht gestorben sind und noch im Fleische leben und darin genau so unter dem Gesetz stehen wie die Gottlosen... Bei Luther hat der Glaube einen solchen Lehrmeister nicht nötig, denn er ist eins mit Gott, weiss und tut seinen Willen, wie ein Kind dem Vater oder ein Freund dem andern zuliebe."
  - 2) e.g. Luther's commentary on Matth. 7,12 (WA 32,497): "Gewöhne dich doch diesen Spruch ein wenig anzusehen und mit dir selbst zu üben, so hast du eine tägliche Predigt im Herzen an allen Wesen und Werken, was du mit dem Nächsten zu handeln und zu tun hast, dadurch du fein kannst lernen alle Gebot und das ganze Gesetz verstehen und dich regieren und führen durch dein und aller Menschen Leben, das du fein darnach urteilen mögest, was in der Welt Recht und Unrecht ist." cf. WA 2 498.10 f.
  - 3) op.cit. p. 72
  - 4) W. Kolffhaus, Vom christlichen Leben nach Joh. Calvin, p. 165 f., in his endeavour to harmonize Luther with Calvin, is definitely too positive about the third use of the law by Luther.
  - 5) cf. Joest, op.cit. p. 212 n.226a: "Luther kennt Gebot, das nicht Gesetz, sondern mit dem Evangelium geeint ist; er kennt Gehorsam, der nicht Knechtschaft, sondern Freiheit des Glaubens ist." p.78: "Das Gesetz ist nicht nur Nötigung zum Transitus, sondern auch Steuerung des Progressus: es lehrt Schritte tun und zeigt die Richtung, in der sie zu geschehen haben."
  - 6) Heintze, op.cit. ~~chapter V p. 66-101~~ p. 258.



g) Development in Luther's preaching concerning Law and Gospel.

Heintze<sup>1</sup> has examined Luther's fundamental sayings concerning the task of the preaching of Law and Gospel. He concludes that from 1522 there is an obvious change in Luther's statements as to the subject of preaching. Before this time Luther stresses the simultaneous preaching of human sin and divine mercy. Jesus Christ himself is the subject of the sermons. "Nihil nisi Christus praedicandus". In the preaching of God's deed in Christ, the misery of man's state is obvious. It is the Cross which at the same time reveals sin and salvation. Luther of course in that time already mentions the special function of the Law, i.e. to reveal sin<sup>2</sup>, but there is no tension between these two sayings. On the whole the reformer in this phase does not attribute to the preaching of the Law a special task before or beside the preaching of the Gospel.

From 1522, however, Luther emphasizes more and more the order of succession: first the Law and then the Gospel. The Law has to be preached first of all as if there were no Gospel. Only after the conscience of the hearer is stirred and frightened, the preacher may proclaim the Gospel of God's forgiveness. Nevertheless, as Heintze demonstrates at the end of the chapter mentioned above<sup>3</sup>, Luther does not cling to this methodical maxim if the text of a sermon points to repentance in connexion with the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

6. The function of the Decalogue in Luther's catechism.

The question of the function of the Decalogue in Luther's catechism is controversial even among Lutheran scholars.<sup>5</sup> The first problem concerns the reason for Luther's placing of the Ten Commandments at

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1) Heintze, op.cit. chapter V p. 66-101

2) see Achelis, Der Dekalog als katechetisches Lehrstück, p. 62.

3) Heintze, op.cit. p. 98-101

4) On this subject see further 'Luther and Agricola', p. 335 ff.

5) cf. Meyer J., op.cit. p. 82 ff; Heintze, op.cit. p. 104 ff.

the beginning of his catechism. Has the ordering Decalogue- Creed - Lord's Prayer a theological or methodological significance or are these three parts interchangeable? Zezschwitz<sup>1</sup> supposes a development of thought (Moses-Christ-Spirit), whereas Achelis<sup>2</sup> tends to consider this order as meaningless. Meyer<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that Luther chose this order with the intention to express his reformed position over against the Roman conception of a Christianity based on meritorious works<sup>4</sup>.

Does Luther himself not give any clue? There are two points of view. On the one hand it is a fact that Luther after 1520 in his sermons on the catechism and in both the large and small catechism follows the definite order Decalogue-Creed-Lord's Prayer. We have already quoted a sentence from the introduction to the "Ein kurze Form" where Luther speaks about the three basic parts of the catechism in this order.<sup>5</sup> He proceeds "Also leren die gepott den menschen seyn kranckheit erkennen, das er siht und empfindet, was er thun und nit thun, lassen und nit lassen kan, und erkennet sich eynen sunder und bösen menschen.

- 1) C.A.G. Zezschwitz, Der Katechismus oder der kirchlich-katechetische Unterricht nach seinem Stoffe, 1864 (1872) p. 278
- 2) E.Chr. Achelis, Der Dekalog als katechetisches Lehrstück, 1905. Achelis at least cannot understand why Luther - if he really considered the Law as<sup>a</sup> preparatory stage for Christianity - did not observe the order Law-Creed when he occasionally spoke or wrote about the 3 main parts of the catechism (see below) p.63. If Luther really should be understood in the other sense, i.e. that the Law definitely had to precede the Gospel, then, Achelis concludes, it is not yet proved that Luther was right. "Es gilt zu fragen, ob es nicht des evangelischen Theologen Pflicht sei, mit der Schrift in der Hand Luther zu korrigieren." p.65. Achelis cannot find this sequence: pre-Christian Law - Gospel in the New Testament. "Die Reden der Apostel in der Apostelgeschichte zu Juden und Heiden zeigen keine Spur, dass sie auf die Gesetzesschrecken den Glauben an Christus gründeten, und der Apostel Paulus würde sich im Grabe umkehren, wenn man von ihm behaupten wollte, er habe die Heiden durch Mose zu Christus geführt." p. 66.
- 3) op.cit. p. 85
- 4) Since 1450 the order Lord's Prayer-Creed-Decalogue had prevailed.
- 5) page 307/8

Darnach helt yhm der glaub fur und leret yhn, wo er die ertzney, die gnaden finden sol, die yhm helff frum werden, das er die gepott halte, Und tzeygt yhm gott und seyne barmhertzickeyt, in Christo ertzeygt und angepotten. Zum dritten leret yhn das vatter unser, wie er die selben begeren, holen und zu sich bringen soll, nemlich mit ordenlichem demutigen trostlichem gepeet, sso wirts yhm geben, und wirt also durch die erfullung der gepott gottis selig."<sup>1</sup>

Here Luther depicts three successive steps which cannot be exchanged without disturbing the logical order: 1) knowledge of the illness, 2) revelation of the medicine, 3) the way to obtain the medicine. This order agrees with Luther's conception of Law and Gospel as interpreted in the previous section. But in the catechism itself the Law is not stressed as preparation for the Gospel. Faith is said to enable us to do what we have to do according to the Ten Commandments.<sup>2</sup>

When Luther writes or speaks about the three principal parts of the catechism he seemingly uses the order at random. Joh. Meyer<sup>3</sup> is of the opinion that Luther chooses the order according to the addressees and the special situation, but Heintze<sup>4</sup> doubts this interpretation. He contends that Luther did not consider this order a matter of principle, but that he chose it on the ground of paedagogical consideration for his practical catechetical teaching.

There is another way of approaching the problem: an investigation of Luther's exegesis of the Decalogue in his catechetical teaching may give us more certainty as to his use of this code. We approach his interpretation with two questions: Does Luther make any practical

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1) WA 7,204.22 ff, and the same in the Betbüchlein of 1522: 10 II 376.19.

2) WA 30 I 182.22. cf. Heintze, op.cit. 105-6: "Der im Dekalog offenbarte Gotteswille ist in diesem Schema die eigentlich bestimmende Kraft. Symbolum und Vaterunser treten in seinen Dienst, um ihn zur Erfüllung zu bringen."

3) op.cit. p. 84

4) op.cit. p. 107

use of his theory that the commandments are written in man's heart, i.e. does he start from natural theology? Has the Decalogue merely the function of Law in its civil and theological use?

It is often remarked that in Luther's interpretation of the Decalogue the first commandment plays a most significant part.<sup>1</sup> This commandment is called the source of all the precepts.<sup>2</sup> We cannot follow here the whole analysis of Luther's catechetical sermons made by Heintze, but note his conclusion that "from the outset the message of Christ is directly or indirectly presupposed as the real heart of the first commandment."<sup>3</sup> According to Luther everybody knows that to have a God means to trust him and believe in him. Nevertheless he states as a fact that the pagan's trust is wrong because it is not directed to the true God.<sup>4</sup> Luther's interpretation then draws exclusively upon Scripture and starts from the presupposition that God is our father who has to be loved, feared and trusted, though he makes astonishing little use of the New Testament. Especially when he starts the interpretation of the Decalogue with the introductory promise "I am the Lord thy God" it is impossible to maintain the strict scheme Law-Gospel, as the offer of God's grace precedes the commandments.

It seems that Luther from 1528, i.e. after depressing experiences in connexion with his visitations, lays more emphasis on the conception "fear". Fear of punishment on one side, hope for reward on the other become important motives in his catechetical teaching. Particularly in the small catechism the civil use of the Law is obviously in the forefront. The catechism has to be taught in a highly legal way.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as Heintze points out, Luther is not faithful

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1) see e.g. Meyer, op.cit. p. 163 ff; Heintze, op.cit. p. 111 ff; Heinr. Bornkamm, Luther und das Alte Testament, p. 139 ff.

2) WA 28,510.1

3) op.cit. p.119, against Meyer (op.cit. p.163) who is of the opinion that Luther only between 1530 and 1537 interpreted the Decalogue on the background of "promissio".

4) WA 30 I 135.6 ff.

5) see the introduction to this catechism!

to his theoretical paedagogical programme in catechetical teaching.<sup>1</sup> Fear and trust are joined so closely together that the scheme law-gospel cannot be maintained consistently. Moreover it is not only the first part of the Small Catechism which must be inculcated legalistically, but the other parts are concerned as well. Heintze supposes that the "glückliche evangelische Inkonsequenz Luthers" has played an important part in preserving the usefulness of his catechism until to-day.<sup>2</sup>

## 7. Luther and Agricola.

### a) Introduction.

The antinomian disputes are one of the murky chapters of the German Reformation. In Luther's altercation with Agricola we have to do not only with theological differences, but with other factors as well. Luther complains - probably not quite unjustified - of Agricola's falsehood and arrogance. On the other hand, Luther's Tischreden of that time reveal an anger and disdain against the former friend and pupil which are out of all proportion to the real issue.

Besides this emotional disturbance of the argument there is another point which makes it rather difficult to perceive Agricola's standpoint: on the one hand he repeatedly tries to conceal his divergence in doctrine, on the other hand Luther fights against an "Antinomism" which in this form probably only existed in the Reformer's imagination and can at least not be identified with Agricola's actual intentions.

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- 1) But compare Schloemann's judgement on Heintze: "Dazu ist nur zu sagen, dass jener Gegensatz zwischen gesetzlich-pädagogischem 'Lehrschema' und evangelischem 'Vollzug' eine willkürliche Konstruktion Heintzes ist", op. cit. p. 38, and his sharp criticism of Heintze's approach generally on p. 36-40.
  - 2) Heintze, op.cit. p. 135.

The Theses of the Antinomians published by Luther on the 1st December 1537<sup>1</sup> are not acknowledged by Agricola as originating from him, and Luther himself admits that the most offensive sentences may not be imputed to Agricola himself but only to his pupils<sup>2</sup>. The eight articles following the theses "are probably conclusions drawn by Luther from single printed or oral statements by Agricola."<sup>3</sup>

Finally it must be noted that the conception "antinomism" is misleading. It does not mean that Agricola rejected the Law wholly; he did not attribute to it the same function and place as Luther did, and it will presently become evident that Luther's use of the term "Law" is quite different from that of Agricola.

#### b) Agricola.<sup>4</sup>

The main points of disagreement are as follows: According to Agricola

- 1) true repentance is not wrought by the preaching of the Law, but by that of the Gospel, because the preaching of the Law results always in fear of punishment and never in love of righteousness.<sup>5</sup>
- 2) Therefore in our preaching we have to proclaim in the first place God's grace in Christ. "Busse soll gelehrt werden nicht aus den zehn Geboten Gottes oder einigem Gesetz Mosis, sondern aus dem Leiden und Sterben des Sohnes Gottes durch das Evangelium."<sup>6</sup>
- 3) The preaching of the Gospel not only reveals God's anger and leads to repentance, but it also raises thankfulness and teaches the Christian how to live according to his faith.

These ideas are for the first time presented in a distinct form in Agricola's "A hundred and thirty questions"<sup>7</sup>. This catechism is

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1) WA 39 I 342 ff.

2) Gustav Kawerau, Johann Agricola von Eisleben, 1881, p. 181.

3) WA 39 I 335

4) For the time between 1524 and 1530 see Gustav Hammann, Nomismus und Antinomismus innerhalb der Wittenberger Theologie von 1524-1530, Diss. Bonn 1952.

5) cf. Hammann, op.cit. p. 34-35      6) Kawerau, op.cit. p. 187

7) "Hundert und dreyssig gemeiner Fragestücke für die jungen Kinder yn



obviously a reaction against Melanchthon's articles of Visitation<sup>1</sup>, in which Melanchthon insists that the Law (= Decalogue) has to be preached before the Gospel because it is the task of the Law to cause penitence (repentance) and to prepare the sinner for faith.

In this point Agricola feels compelled to disagree with his old friend for biblical reasons: "The Gospel in the first place preaches Christ's atonement and secondly it preaches also that we shall repent." Paul in his Epistle to the Romans preaches in eleven chapters how they can attain to God's inheritance by faith, and only after this he exhorts the faithful to walk in a new life. Thus Paul did not trouble Jews and pagans first with commandments, fear, and terror of God's judgment and the consideration of sins, but he laid the foundation on Christ's atonement and resurrection, not fearing that this teaching would make rude Christians who would use the freedom given to them in a bad way.<sup>2</sup>

If Agricola calls the Old Testament Law "der Juden Sachsenspiegel" he does not diverge from Luther. Their argument concerns the second use of the Law, the "usus theologicus" which is paramount in Luther's theology. Agricola does not acknowledge such a function of the Law, as, according to him, recognition of sin and repentance is not effected by the Law, but by the preaching of the Gospel. What remains is thus solely the "usus civilis", and this function of the Law does not concern the Christians.<sup>3</sup> Casually Agricola mentions a sin-revealing use of the Law<sup>4</sup>, but this is not consistent with his proper outlook.

God's dealing with Israel in the Old Testament is depicted as an experiment which has failed to restrict sin<sup>5</sup>. If Agricola says that God eventually "became aware of this fact",<sup>6</sup> then this form of expression

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der Deutschen Meydlin schule zu Eyslebe, vom wort Gottes, glauben, gebete, heiligen geiste, creutze un liebe, auch ein unterricht von der Tauffe, Und leibe und blute Christi" (Autumn 1527).

1) Articuli de quibus egerunt (per) Visitatores, 1527.

2) Questions 71-73, see Kawerau, op.cit. p. 143-144.

3) Quest. 15, 104 f.

4) e.g. in "Kinderzucht" 1527

5) Quest. 75-78

6) "imo longo usu nunc didicerat" Kawerau op.cit. p. 134 n.1.

may be merely an attempt to simplify the matter for his pupils.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless this conception reveals a lack of recognising the relation - whether understood positively or negatively - between Law and Gospel which is present in the Old as well as in the New Testament.

It is thus the preaching of God's grace and kindness which leads to a change of heart<sup>2</sup> and effects repentance. In the light of this kindness man "recognises his error and failure, he cries because of his unbelief, i.e. he repents and takes care not to provoke anger in Him who has forgiven so much."<sup>3</sup> Agricola wishes to defend the principle of the reformation against the pope who claims first repentance in order that man becomes worthy of grace. The Gospel, says Agricola, first preaches Christ's satisfaction and only afterwards it tells us to repent.

If repentance (penitence) comes from the preaching of the Gospel it is self-evident that the stress lies not on fear and terror, but on joy and thankfulness for God's gift. This repentance consists particularly in the good intention, i.e. not to sin again, not to arouse God's anger after he has been so kind towards man.

Kawerau points to the fact that Agricola hardly ever speaks about the guilt of sin.<sup>4</sup> Man's degenerate nature compells him to sin. Therefore sin is considered rather as an illness, an evil, a misfortune.<sup>5</sup> Consequently the Gospel seems to be conceived as a kind of medicine which heals man of this ailment. Man's heart is moved when hearing of God's kindness and this emotion results in repentance with its good intention for the future.

Like Luther, Agricola does not teach expressly a tertius usus legis. A life of repentance has no need of the Law because the faithful act

1) cf. Hammann, op.cit. p. 32-33: "Nach Agricola ist Gott durch böse Erfahrungen zum "Glauben" gekommen, zum Glauben an die Notwendigkeit, angesichts der Hartnäckigkeit des Menschen einen neuen Weg einschlagen zu müssen."

2) Rom. 2,4

3) Qu. 11.66.67; Kawerau p. 143

4) op.cit. p. 133

5) see Hammann, op.cit. p. 20-21

from gratitude. God's Spirit has planted in the human heart an impulse which fulfils God's Law willingly and gladly. Man will of course not be free from all sins, but as these sins stem rather from weakness than from obstinacy, they do not matter. They are a means in God's hand of keeping the Christian in humility. If Agricola in his talk with Melanchthon indicated that he would have replaced the Decalogue by the Pauline exhortations in the second parts of his letters, it seems that he at least took a 'third use of the Law' into consideration, though he would probably not have called it 'Law'.<sup>1</sup>

The disagreement between Agricola and Melanchthon was discussed in Torgau<sup>2</sup> in the presence of Luther and Bugenhagen, and a compromise settled the matter for the time being. Luther, who had obviously not yet read the 130 Questions, still thought that Agricola taught in agreement with his own doctrine.

In Eisleben Agricola came into sharp conflict with the Roman-Catholic preacher Witzel who taught that the keeping of the Law wrought forgiveness of sin. These experiences promoted his "antinomian" tendencies. He reproaches the theologians in Wittenberg that they preach repentance based on the Law instead of on the Gospel and that they make Christ a Moses by calling good works compulsory (= providing them with a "must"). It seems that his followers praised him as the Paul of the reformation whereas Luther, as Peter, was to be rebuked because he did not act according to the truth of the Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

The dissension between Agricola and Luther began in the summer of 1537 when the former - now in Wittenberg - published three sermons in which his peculiar view was presented unequivocally: "The Gospel is duplex

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1) see Kawerau p. 149; CR I 918. cf. Hammann, op.cit. p. 106: "Agricola gibt durchaus die Notwendigkeit zu, dass auch das Christenleben unter "praecepta" gestellt wird; nur sucht er diese Gebote im Unterschied eben zu Melanchthon im Evangelium und nicht ausserhalb seiner in einem von Christus gelösten selbständigen Gesetz zu gründen. Zugleich wird deutlich, dass Agricola die paulinische Paränese von der lex trennt; er scheint sie als dritte Grösse neben das Gesetz und das Evangelium gestellt zu haben."

2) 26th - 28th November 1527

3) Letter of Wendelin Faber to C. Güttel, see Kawerau p. 165/6

revelatio, firstly it reveals from heaven justitiam Dei, how man becomes just before God... secondly it reveals also from heaven iram Dei, eternal curse for all who either laugh at this first revelation or misuse or persecute it." "If we remember Christ's teaching, his death and resurrection, or all his deeds, therefrom comes the true knowledge of our weakness, a true penitence, remorse and grievance because of our misery and night, and a hearty longing for God and the day."<sup>1</sup>

Luther presently preached against this opinion, then was satisfied by a confession of Agricola in which the latter somehow concealed the points of disagreement. But on the 1st December 1537 Luther published the "Antinomian Positions" which had already circulated secretly for some time among the "brethren" of Wittenberg. These "Positions" became the basis for 6 series of theses (disputationes) by Luther and three disputes between the quarreling parties in the years 1537-1540.<sup>2</sup>

Agricola's acknowledgment of his "errors" and their revocation in 1540 by which an outward reconciliation with the theologians in Wittenberg was attained, lies beyond our present scope.

### c) Luther against Agricola.

Luther reproaches the Antinomians that they do not understand the real meaning of penitence, as penitence in any case means grief because of sin, which can lead eventually to desperation, to the hating of God and descending to hell. This grief can only be brought about by the Law which affects the heart or conscience. Only after the terrified heart is comforted by the Gospel is it able to show the good intention. Luther discerns thus four items:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1) preaching of the Law    | 2) first part of penitence:<br>grief of sin                   |
| 3) preaching of the Gospel | 4) second part of penitence:<br>good intention <sup>3</sup> , |

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1) Drey Sermon und Predigen, 1st June 1537 (Kawerau p. 174/5)

2) WA 39 I p. 342-584.

3) "Poenitentiae prior pars, scilicet dolor, est ex lege tantum. Altera

whereas Agricola has only two:

- 1) Preaching of the Gospel      2) penitence: good intention.

Luther cannot imagine a proper understanding of the Gospel if the proclamation of God's grace is not preceded by contrition. And because this contrition is a result of the preaching of the Law, then the abrogation of the Law in the Church is a blasphemy and a sacrilege.<sup>1</sup>

Here lies of course a real difference between Luther and Agricola. Grief for sin (*dolor de peccato*) is for Luther an essential element of repentance, whereas Agricola stresses the correction of life. He interprets penitence as "desisting from sins and fleeing from them", but that does not necessarily include the feeling of one's guilt and remorse because of the passed transgressions.<sup>2</sup> We have mentioned before that Agricola conceived of sin rather as an illness or misfortune which means of course that man is hardly responsible for his state. His responsibility actually begins when the Gospel is preached to him, because despising God's justice which is revealed in the Gospel, means to come under his wrath.<sup>3</sup>

It is generally admitted that Luther's theology was influenced to a great degree by his own experience<sup>4</sup>. But we must admit that grief of sin

pars, sc. propositum bonum, non potest ex lege esse. Ideo addenda est legi promissio seu Euangelion, quae conscientiam territam pacet et erigat, ut bonum proponat." WA 39 I 345.24f. 28f. cf. 543 f.

1) WA 39 I 364.32 f.

2) "Das Moment der Reue als eines sich schuldig föhlens, einer Erfahrung des Gerichtes Gottes über die Schuld der Sünde, tritt bei ihm so sehr zurück, dass es fast völlig ausser Betracht bleibt." Kawerau, op.cit. p. 184.

3) see quotations from the three sermons, p. 339 f (above).

4) cf. Karl Holl, Ges. Aufs. Bd. 1 p.32: "Luthers Gottesbild ist die getreue Wiedergabe des von ihm Durchlebten."

W. Mundle, Religion und Sittlichkeit bei Paulus in ihrem innern Zusammenhang, ZsystTh 1926/7 H. 3 p. 467: "Das Christentum Luthers ist... auf dem Boden der katholischen Buss- und Beichtpraxis erwachsen, die solches Sündenbewusstsein und solche bis heute noch im Katholizismus vorhandene Heilsunsicherheit geschaffen hat, wie sie Luther durch seine Hinwendung zum Wort als dem festen Anker des Glaubens zu überwinden bestrebt war."



and contrition play a part in the New Testament, though not to the same extent as in Luther's doctrine. At any rate sin in the New Testament is not considered as an ailment or misfortune, but as rebellion, and man is made responsible for his actions, he is really guilty. This fact seems to have been overlooked by Agricola.

But there is another point of dissent: Agricola contends that in Luther's writings there are two different doctrines of penitence and remission of sin: sometimes Luther teaches salvation through Law and Gospel, sometimes through the Gospel without Law. This view might be caused by a misunderstanding, as Luther on the one hand asserts that the Law attributes absolutely nothing to justification<sup>1</sup>, but on the other hand calls the law absolutely necessary, because the revelation of sin wrought by the Law is the condition of justification.<sup>2</sup>

But Agricola's criticism of Luther probably has another reason. In our paragraph on "Development in Luther's preaching concerning Law and Gospel"<sup>3</sup> we have pointed to the fact that Luther in his sermons, especially in the years before 1522, followed the maxim "nihil nisi Christus praedicandus", and that he asserts that the Cross of Christ at the same time reveals sin and salvation. And though in later years he insisted theoretically on the order of succession: first the Law and then the Gospel, nevertheless in practice he can preach repentance on the basis of the Gospel if a text suggests this.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note that Luther himself admits this change in method. In the third disputation against the Antinomians he explains

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- 1) "Lex non solum est non necessaria ad iustificationem, sed plane inutilis et prorsus impossibilis." WA 39 I 347.27 f.
  - 2) "Satis claret legem esse maxime necessariam et utilem." ib. 348.23f.
  - 3) see p. 331
  - 4) cf. Heintze, op.cit. p. 230: "Als eigentliches Mittel der Sünden-erkenntnis erscheint in den Passionspredigten nicht das Gesetz, sondern eben die Betrachtung des Leidens Christi." p. 255: "Ungezählte Male verfährt Luther in seiner Predigt nach dem Schema, Christus zuerst als donum, bzw. als sacramentum und darauf als exemplum zu verkündigen. Wo letzteres geschieht, ist ebensowenig



that in former times he began with the teaching of the Gospel and used the same words as the Antinomians.<sup>1</sup> But since then the times have changed. At the beginning of the Reformation people were afraid and in trouble under the pressure of the pope, so that it was not necessary to preach the Law.<sup>2</sup> The desperate and worried needed the admonition not to despair but to flee to the grace and mercy of Christ.

But now the Antinomians go on preaching only the joyful part of Christ's promise, because it does not occur to them that people at present feel secure, are bad and lead an Epicurean life. Through the preaching of the Gospel those people become still more secure. "Iam certo isti nostri volunt praedicare conciones saeculi contritorum in saeculo securorum. Id quod certe non est recte secare verbum Dei, sed lacerare et dissipare et perdere animas."<sup>3</sup>

Luther acknowledges that the preaching of the Law does not effect penitence automatically, because only if God's Spirit is working does man really experience the power of the Law. But it would be stupid

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wie in den Passionspredigten ein vom eigentlichen Evangelium losgelöstes Gesetz das Richtmass, sondern so wie in ihnen wird auch sonst die Paränese ausdrücklich auf die Botschaft von Christus für uns bezogen."

- 1) "Est verum, nos sub initium causae huius coepimus strenue docere Evangelium et utebatur etiam istis verbis, quibus Antinomi." WA 39 I 571.10 ff.
- 2) "Sic iam oppressis, perterritis, miseris, anxiiis, afflictis conscientiiis non opus erat legem inculcare aut saltem docere." ib. 572.2 ff.
- 3) ib. 574.5 ff. cf. Tischreden, Erl. Ausg. Bd. 58 p. 336:  
 "Unser Antinomer und Gesetzstürmer wollen den Leuten, so sicher sind, muthwilliglich heucheln und fuchsschwänzen und sie fromm machen durch das Wort Gerechtigkeit; da doch itzt eine solche Welt und Zeit ist, so mit dem Donnerschlage des Gesetzes nicht kann geschreckt noch gedemüthiget und gebrochen werden. Man soll itzt donnern und blitzen mit dem Gesetz umb der grossen Sicherheit willen, in welcher die ganze Welt und der grösste Haufe ersoffen ist; denn Bürger, Bauern, Edelleute etc. sind so stolz und gottlos, das sie keins Pfarrherrn noch Predigers achten, geben nicht ein Klipplin auf sie."

to draw the conclusion from this fact that the Law ought not to be preached, because the human heart is moved and converted only by God's mercy. God wants us to teach the Law<sup>1</sup>. It was not easy for Luther to defend his method over against the Antinomians<sup>2</sup>, because - as he admits himself - he at one time had used the same words as they, and in his actual preaching he was not faithful to his maxim.

Luther concedes that "the Law" is not confined to the Decalogue or the Old Testament, but "whatever testifies sin, wrath or death fulfils the office of the law, whether this happens through the Old or the New Testament. - Revelare enim peccatum est aliud nihil nec aliud esse potest, quam esse legem, seu effectum et vim legis propriissimam."<sup>3</sup> A reconciliation between Luther and the Antinomians on the basis of Biblical texts was not possible, because the different understanding of the term penitence led to divergent interpretations of the pertinent texts. So Luke 24,46 f. for the Antinomians was a proof for their proposition that penitence (repentance) has to be preached in Jesus' name, thus penitence results from Gospel preaching. For Luther however the term penitence comprehends law and contrition - thus Christ told the Apostles to preach the Law!<sup>4</sup> The same contrary interpretations are

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- 1) "Multi audiunt legem, et tamen neque minis neque terroribus eius moventur, quia non sentiunt vim legis. Ideo neminem virtute meae praedicationis converto, nisi Deus adsit et suo Spiritu cooperetur." op.cit. p. 368.13 ff; cf. 345.20 f.
  - 2) This is of course not Schloemann's opinion, cf. op.cit. p. 48 n.135: "Luther stellt seinen Zuhörern die Antinomer als exemplarisch denk-schwache Theologen hin... Dass die antinomischen Schriftbelege Luther bei der - eher aggressiven als defensiven - Verteidigung seiner Thesen besondere Schwierigkeiten bereitet hätten, wie G. Heintze (a.a.O. S. 88) behauptet, ist aus der Luft gegriffen."
  - 3) op.cit. 348.25 ff.  
cf. R. Hermann, Zum Streit um die Ueberwindung des Gesetzes, Weimar 1958, p.20: "Herauszuheben ist, dass Luther den Begriff des Gesetzes gleichsam 'funktionell' fasst und ihn nicht an sein Urhebertum (A.T., N.T., Mose, Christus, Dekalog, Bergpredigt, Gesetzessammlungen, Paränesen usw.) bindet... Das Gesetz ist nicht sowohl Statut als vielmehr Prinzip."
  - 4) op.cit. 342.11 ff; 347.17 f; 415.14: "Sunt enim in grammatica diversa

applied to Joh. 16,8 and several other passages.<sup>1</sup>

One of the strongest points from the New Testament upheld by the Antinomians is Rom. 2,4: "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Here Luther acknowledges that the contemplation of God's kindness is able to strike the soul and press the heart more than any law, but because of this effect it is nothing else than - preaching the Law which must be succeeded by the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> So Luther in order to maintain his "ordo salutis" makes from God's kindness first a Law preceding the Gospel. It is obvious that this explanation is given in order to maintain his position against the Antinomians and is hardly practicable in actual teaching and preaching.<sup>3</sup>

We can understand Luther's vigorous struggle against the Antinomians only if we take into account what according to him was at stake:

- If we preach only the Gospel and neglect the Law, secure and presumptuous people will become more secure and fall from grace. (For Luther the Gospel is sheer gift and does not require anything from man).
- If there is no preaching of the Law, the "Anfechtung" disappears, man is not prepared for the reception of the Gospel.
- If there is no Law, there is no sin, no wrath, no death, consequently we do not need Christ<sup>4</sup>

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vocabula poenitentia, imo et lex, sed tamen quoad rem idem est praedicare poenitentiam et praedicare legem, et non sunt diversa, sed idem."

1) cf. WA 39 I 566-567

2) See Argumentum XVIII in third dispute, WA 39 I 532 ff and Luther's conclusion: "Idem est, sive hoc fiat praedicatione beneficiorum Christi sive legis nihil refert, tamen est lex." 536.3 f.

3) cf. Heintze, op.cit. p. 89: "Wie soll man sich in der Interpretation Luthers von Röm. 2,4 die Verkündigung der 'benignitas' Gottes eigentlich konkret vorstellen?"

4) WA 39 I 348.40; 546.

- The suppression of the Law leads to libertinism<sup>1</sup>.

It is these consequences drawn by Luther himself which led him to accuse the Antinomians of teachings and of behaviour which at least did not apply to Agricola.<sup>2</sup>

d) The real issue.

At the end of this summary let us try to state the real issue between Luther and Agricola. For Agricola it is the preaching of the Gospel (= New Testament) which effects penitence, i.e. which reveals God's grace and wrath. The Law (= Old Testament) therefore is not necessary. For Luther the Gospel (= the word of grace) does not reveal sin, therefore the Law (especially the Decalogue as far as it agrees with natural law) has to be preached previous to the Gospel. Otherwise man is either not prepared for the acceptance of God's grace or he misunderstands the Gospel.

These two sentences, which deliberately depict the issue somewhat simplified<sup>3</sup>, reveal a divergent interpretation of the terms Gospel and Law. If for Agricola the preaching of the Gospel reveals God's wrath and effects penitence (which according to Luther is exclusively a result of the Law), then Agricola's "Gospel" contains an element

- 1) WA 39 I 349.3 and 9; cf. 525.3f: "Ita securissime pergunt facere, quod faciunt, et transferunt meritum passionis Christi et remissionis peccatorum in luxuriam."
- 2) cf. Kawerau, op.cit. p. 191: "Freilich hat Luther es nicht lassen können, im Verlauf des Kampfes je länger je mehr seinem Gegner Konsequenzen, Motive und Tendenzen zu imputieren, die diesem nicht in den Sinn gekommen sind. Ohne zu scheiden, was Agricola selbst gelehrt, und was ein naheliegender Missbrauch aus seiner Lehre machen könnte, auch tatsächlich hie und da schon gemacht haben möchte, schlug er auf den Antinomismus als auf einen Bauchdienst und sicheres Sündenleben los."
- 3) Whether Luther uses "Gospel" in the sense of "word of Grace" or in the sense of "New Testament Scriptures" has to be taken from the context. The first meaning is prevalent in our texts. Agricola, though not speaking about the Law (= Old Testament) sees in the New Testament exhortations somehow a parallel to the Decalogue. See his statement to Melanchthon, p. 339.

which is identical with Luther's "Law". If on the other hand Luther acknowledges that the proclamation of God's kindness leads to repentance, then he acknowledges also that penitence can be brought about by the Gospel, though he introduces the term Law in order to save his system (and his face?).

For Luther everything which reveals that man is not perfect, or which alludes to his failure, is "law". He gives the definition: "Law is that which shows us what we have not though we ought to have it."<sup>1</sup> Consequently the Lord's Prayer is "full of the doctrine of law"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, says Luther, the enemies of the law ought to abolish the Lord's Prayer as well as the larger part of Christ's teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Heintze in his analysis of Luther's sermons on Christ's suffering concludes that in these sermons it is not the law which appears as the proper means of knowledge of sin, but the consideration of Christ's suffering.<sup>4</sup> Luther acknowledges this fact even in his treatise against the Antinomians: "Ich hab freilich gelert, lere auch noch, das man die sunder solle zur busse reitzen durch die predigt oder betrachtung des leidens Christi, damit sie sehen, wie gros der zorn Gottes uber die sunde sey, Das da kein ander hülffe wider sey, denn das Gottes son musse dafur sterben."

This confession of Luther is exactly Agricola's concern: "Busse soll gelehrt werden nicht aus den 10 Geboten Gottes oder einigem Gesetz Mosis, sondern aus dem Leiden und Sterben des Sohnes Gottes durch das Evangelium."

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- 1) "Lex autem est, quae nobis prius ostendit, quid non habeamus, et quod tamen sit necessario habendum." WA 39 I 351.25 f.
  - 2) ib. 351.1; cf. 351.21 ff: "Quare et ipsa oratio Dominica docet legem esse ante, sub et post Evangelion et ab ipsa inchoandam esse poenitentiam. Qui enim petit aliquid, prius fatetur sese non habere quod petit et expectat donandum."
  - 3) ib. 351.27 ff
  - 4) Heintze, op.cit. p. 230
  - 5) WA 50, 471.1 ff.
  - 6) Kawerau, op.cit. p. 187

In another passage in his treatise against the Antinomians Luther seems to approach Agricola's standpoint when he says that "though the term "Law" is not used, nevertheless conscience is frightened by the Law if the sermon says that Christ had to fulfil the Law for us so costly. "Denn das Gesetze erschreckt wol grewlicher, wenn ich höre, das Christus Gottes Son hat müssen dasselb für mich tragen, weder so es mir ausser Christo und on solch grosse marter des sons Gottes, nur allein mit drewen were für gepredigt."<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact this was precisely the point Agricola wanted to make. Luther cannot possibly understand how his adversaries teach the "revelation of God's wrath" while putting the Law aside.<sup>2</sup> He says he perceives well "was schendlicher jrthum mit diesem Katzenstülgen der Teuffel meinet"<sup>3</sup>, but it does not seem to occur to him that the divergence of views might be caused by a different interpretation of the term Law.<sup>4</sup>

If we view the issue from this angle it seems that the discussion suffers from a lack of precise definition of the terms "Law and Gospel", and that Agricola with his use of these terms was - to say the least - not farther from Biblical terminology and practice than Luther.

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1) WA 50, 473.16 ff

2) ib. 474.23 f.

3) ib. 474.25

4) cf. Schloemann, op.cit. p. 51-52: "... es ist nicht zu verwundern, wenn auch immer wieder übersehen, dass Luther im Antinomerstreit, wo sein Gesetzesbegriff nun wirklich auf die Probe gestellt wird, sich fast überhaupt nicht erst auf die durch das - falsch als vorläufigen Heilsweg verstandene - Mosegesetz bestimmte Fragestellung der Antinomer einlässt, sondern selbst durchgehend von der adamitischen lex naturae aus argumentiert."

It is evident that the antinomian position was defeated by Luther, but his victory was won with the weapons of medieval theology, cf. Schloemann, p. 53-54: "So war denn mit diesem Begriff des universalen, immer schon vorgegebenen Gesetzes der an diesem Punkte unklare Antinomismus wenigstens auf der Ebene wissenschaftlicher Theologie leicht zu widerlegen. Denn damals war ja die Legitimität einer theologischen Argumentation mit der lex naturae noch unbestritten."



The different understanding of the notion of penitence has already been analysed. It is a fact that in Agricola's definition, contrition has hardly any place, which has to be seen in connexion with the underrating of man's responsibility concerning his sin.

On the other hand Luther's theoretical formalism overlooks that real contrition can be effected by the preaching of the Gospel (grace) and that the Holy Spirit need not follow the scheme Law - grief of sin - Gospel - good intention. In the New Testament there are plenty of evidences of God's freedom, so that actually neither Luther's nor Agricola's formalisms are justified.

At times Luther was undoubtedly aware of this fact. Heintze points to the following revealing remark: "Non est homo, qui vivit in terris qui sciat discernere inter legem et euangelium. Wir lassens vns wol geduncken, wen wir horen predigen, wir verstehens; aber es felet weit. Solus Spiritus Sanctus hoc scit. Dem man Christus hats auch gefelt am berge, ut Angelus cogeatur eum consolari; der war doch Doctor, von himel durch den Engel confirmirt. Ich hett gemeint, ich kundt es, weill ich so lang und uill daruon geschriben, aber wenn es an das tref-fen gett, so sich ich wol, das es mir weitt, weitt felet. Also soll vnd muss allein Gott der heiligist meister sein."<sup>1</sup>

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1) WA Tischreden 2,3.20 Nr. 1234.

cf. Heintze, op.cit. p.275: "Dass Luther um diesen existentiellen Charakter der Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium wusste und sich in seinen eigenen Anfechtungen immer neu vor das Glaubenswagnis ihres Vollzuges gestellt sah, hat wohl wesentlich dazu beigetragen, dass er im praktischen Vollzug des Predigens nicht einer falschen Schematisierung von einer als Prinzip verstandenen Lehrunterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium her erlag."

## § 17. Calvin and the Decalogue<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Calvin's catechisms.

#### a) The catechism of 1537.

At the beginning of the year 1537 the Church of Geneva was given its first catechism, composed by Calvin a few months after he had been forced to stay in that town by Farel.<sup>2</sup> This catechism consists of 39 short chapters. In an introductory part it treats the destiny of man and his miserable state. Then under the heading "How we are restored to salvation and life" Calvin expounds the aim of God's law. This law, the observance of which would make us just and holy, actually reveals our misery. But this knowledge of our wretched state is essential for salvation. By destroying our security and false confidence God as it were opens a first door to his kingdom.<sup>3</sup> In the two tables of the Decalogue God has revealed fully and clearly all he asks from us.<sup>4</sup> After the interpretation of the Ten Commandments in which Calvin keeps

#### 1) References:

- I 1,1 = Institutio, liber I, cap. 1, paragr. 1, quoted from  
Barth/Niesel, Joannis Calvini, Opera Selecta  
OS = Opera selecta, ed. Barth/Niesel  
CR = Corpus Reformatorum, Calvini opera  
Rilliet = Rilliet & Dufour, Le Catéchisme Français de Calvin (1537)  
Genève 1878  
Qu. 1 = Question 1 in "Le Catéchisme de l'Eglise de Genève 1542"  
quoted from W. Niesel, Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchen-  
ordnungen, Zollikon-Zürich 1938.

- 2) Instruction et confession de foy dont on use en l'église de Genève.
- 3) "Et plustost desjà luy mesmes nous a ouvert comme une première porte en son royaume, quand il a destruit ces deux très-mauvaises pestes, à sçavoir est la sécurité contre sa vengeance & la faulse confiance de nous." Rilliet p.13.
- 4) "En la Loy de Dieu nous est donnée une très-parfaicte reigle de toute justice, laquelle par bonne rayson on peult appeller l'éternelle volonté du Seigneur; car là il a pleinement & clairement compris en deux tables tout ce qu'il requiert de nous." Rilliet p.14.

accurately to the biblical text, he points to the double commandment of love as a summary of God's law. In conclusion Calvin asserts that the law in and by itself can only condemn, but this statement then leads to the following subject of his catechism: faith. The law is a step in the coming to Christ.<sup>1</sup> Through faith we are justified in Christ, but we are also sanctified in order to obey the law. Now the use of the law is very different. If the law formerly only accused us because of our transgressions, now it becomes a light which guides our steps so that we do not depart from the right way.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin then explains the Creed and in a following part speaks about prayer with a short interpretation of the Lord's Prayer. The treatment of the Sacraments finally is followed by short paragraphs on the ministers of the Church, human traditions, excommunication and the magistrate.

After this short survey let us question the sources of this catechism. If it is compared with the "Institutio", which was published about a year before our catechism, we discover striking parallels, not only in the arrangement, but also in the phrasing. It even comes to light that in the second part of the catechism many passages are literally taken over from the Institutes.<sup>3</sup>

As the 'Institutio' in its great lines was drafted following the pattern of Luther's catechisms<sup>4</sup> it is not surprising that Calvin's

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1) "Que la Loy est un degré pour venir à Christ." Rilliet p. 31.

2) "Or maintenant l'usage de la Loy est bien aultre aux chrestiens qu'il puisse estre sans foy; car où le Seigneur a engravé en noz cueurs l'amour de sa justice, la doctrine extérieure de la Loy (laquelle seulement auparavant nous accusoit d'imbécillité & de transgression), est maintenant une lampe pour guider noz piedz, affin que ne desvoions du droict chemin; nostre sagesse par laquelle nous soions forméz, instituéz & encouragéz à toute intégrité; nostre discipline laquelle ne nous seuffre estre dissoluz par licence mauvaise." Rilliet p. 41.

3) Rilliet p. xlix

4) cf. W. Niesel, Calvin und Luther, in Ref. Kirchenzeitung 1931 p.196: "Die erste Institutio ist nicht nur hinsichtlich des Aufbaus

catechism in its structure should show a great similarity to the catechism of the German Reformer. The principal parts are arranged in the same succession: Law, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Sacraments. In the treatment of the Law is stressed its sin-revealing function, the so-called *usus theologicus*, according to Luther, the main use of the law. Nevertheless there are two striking deviations from Luther's catechism: Calvin does not use an abbreviated text of the Decalogue, and he explicitly points to the "third use" of the law which ~~la~~ter was to be designated as its main function.

Calvin's catechism of 1537 has not become a popular means of youth-instruction, though it was used by several French congregations<sup>1</sup> and probably by Calvin himself during his stay at Strasbourg<sup>2</sup> where he ministered to the French congregation from 1538 till 1541. After Calvin had been compelled to leave Geneva<sup>3</sup> his catechism was replaced by a French translation of the catechism of Megander.<sup>4</sup>

The reason of this failure has to be seen mainly in the many sided purpose underlying the composition of the catechism.<sup>5</sup> Besides being an instruction it was intended to be a "confession of faith" (see title of the catechism) which had to be received under oath by every citizen of Geneva. Though a few months later a more concise "confession of

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(Gesetz, Glaube, Unservater, Sakramente) dem kleinen Katechismus Luthers nachgebildet, sondern der kleine Katechismus ist weithin wörtlich in die Institutio aufgenommen worden, und zwar so, dass Calvins eigene Ausführungen sich auf den wörtlich übernommenen Gedanken Luthers aufbauen."

see further Aug. Lang, Die Quellen der Institutio von 1536, EvTh 1936 p. 100 ff., and

Diehl, Calvins Auslegung des Dekalogs in der ersten Ausgabe seiner Institutio und Luthers Katechismen, ThStKr 1898 p. 141 ff.

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|---|------------------------------|
| 1) Marc Boegner, Les Catéchismes de Calvin, Pamiers 1905, p. 83 n.1 |                              |
| 2) Boegner op.cit. p. 36 f.   | 3) 24th April 1538.          |
| 4) Boegner op.cit. p. 83.   | 5) Boegner op.cit. p. 29 ff. |

faith"<sup>1</sup> was accepted for this purpose, nevertheless the catechism was obviously drafted with this end in mind.

Moreover the catechism was written in order to defend the Reformers against the accusations of Arianism, made by Caroli, minister in Lausanne. This aim is plainly revealed in Calvin's introduction to the Latin translation of this catechism, published in 1538.

It has been said that Calvin's catechism failed in all three matters for which it had been designed<sup>2</sup>, but we are concerned only with the subject of youth-instruction. For this purpose the catechism was obviously too complicated, heavily laden with theological discussion and thus not adapted to simple minds which were to be introduced to the elementary parts of the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup>

#### b) The catechism of 1541.

When Calvin was called back to Geneva he immediately composed a new catechism (November, 1541) which was published without any delay.<sup>4</sup>

If we compare this with the previous catechism we notice considerable differences. As is revealed in the title, the matter is presented in the form of questions and answers. The subjects are no longer developed in chapters, but in 55 lessons or "Sundays". The starting point has not changed, the principal aim of human life is the knowledge of God. Then Calvin explains that real knowledge means to know God in order to honour him. This proper honouring consists of four parts:

- 1) "Confession de la Foy laquelle tous bourgeois et habitans de Genève et subjectz du pays doibvent jurer de garder et tenir, extraicte de l'Instruction dont on use en l'Eglise de la dicte ville."
- 2) Boegner, op.cit. p. 31.
- 3) Rilliet, p. xxxix: "Son Catéchisme fut plutôt le résumé et comme quintessence de son Institution, qu'un manuel approprié à la portée des jeunes intelligences qu'il s'agissait d'initier à la connaissance de la nouvelle doctrine."
- 4) Le Catéchisme de l'Eglise de Genève: c'est-à-dire le formulaire d'instruire les enfants en la chrestienté: faict en matière de dialogue, ou le ministre interrogue et l'enfant répond. Par I. Calvin.

- 1) to put our whole trust in God
- 2) to serve him and obey his will
- 3) to pray to him in all our necessities
- 4) to acknowledge that all good proceeds from him alone.<sup>1</sup>

These four points are developed in the following parts and thus form the arrangement of the catechism:

- 1) Creed    2) Law    3) Prayer    4) Word and Sacraments

The most spectacular change compared with the former catechism is thus the reversal of Law and Creed. As we can only trust in God if we know him as Father and Saviour, and as his mercy is revealed in Jesus Christ, consequently we need the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The substance of this knowledge is summarized in the Creed. Hence the interpretation of the Apostolic Creed precedes the rest of the catechism.

After the exposition of the Creed, Calvin asks whether it is possible to believe in order to be justified without doing good works. The question is denied, because to believe in Jesus Christ means to receive him as such as he gives himself to us. He does not only promise to deliver us from death and reinstate us in God's grace, but also to regenerate us by his Spirit in order that we may live a saintly life.<sup>2</sup> Faith is thus the root from which stem the good works.

Then appears the second item in our honouring of God: service and obedience. As God does not want us to serve him according to our fancy, but according to his will<sup>3</sup> he has given us the Law to govern us.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1) "Quelle est la maniere de le bien honnorer? C'est que nous ayons toute nostre fiance en luy: que nous le servions en obeissant à sa volonté: que nous le requerions en toutes noz necessitez, cherchant en luy salut et tous biens: et que nous reconnoissions, tant de cuer que de bouche, que tout bien procede de luy seul." Qu. 7.
  - 2) Qu. 126
  - 3) Qu. 130
  - 4) Qu. 131



Without further explanation about the conception "Law" Calvin starts the interpretation of the Ten Commandments, following the text of Exodus 20. At the end of this explanation Calvin states that the whole law can be summarized in the double commandment of love, however without pointing to the teaching of Jesus. A short exposition of the double office of the Law concludes the second part of the catechism.

The main purpose of this catechism was the religious instruction of the people of Geneva, especially of the children. The parents who failed to send their children regularly to this instruction were blamed and even fined. But there were also adults who followed the catechetical course; particularly foreigners who settled in Geneva were urged to attend the lectures in order to adapt themselves to the spirit of the reformed town.<sup>1</sup>

With this primary purpose of his catechism Calvin connected another aim.<sup>2</sup> He intended his catechism to be a Symbol of Faith not only for the Church of Geneva, but also for the other Reformed Churches, a confession which was able to distinguish them from the surrounding "Synagogues of the Antichrist". As a matter of fact this aim was fully attained. "Not only in Geneva, but everywhere where the influence of Calvin spread, the Formulaire, which was translated into almost all the European languages, even into Greek and Hebrew, was made for many years the basis of catechetical instruction and a symbol of the Reformed Churches."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless the Catechism of Geneva was not able to remain master of the field of catechetical instruction in the Reformed Churches as did the "Small Catechism" of Luther in the Lutheran Churches. Already in 1563 appeared the Heidelberg Catechism which rapidly gained influence, especially after it was declared a symbolic book for the Reformed

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1) Boegner, op.cit. p. 43

2) See introduction to the Latin publication of the Catechism of 1545, OS 6,6.

3) Boegner, op.cit. p. 44.

Churches by the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) and at the same time officially accepted as Catechism for youth instruction in the German speaking Reformed Churches.<sup>1</sup> Since 1791 the Catechism of Geneva has disappeared as a means of catechetical instruction in the Reformed Churches, and later endeavours to reintroduce it as such have failed.<sup>2</sup>

According to Boegner the following reasons are held responsible for its disappearance: the catechism of Geneva is too dogmatic, not practical and simple enough for children. He quotes Kampschulte: "Calvin met dans la bouche de l'enfant une apologie du Consistoire."<sup>3</sup> The symbolic interpretation is too difficult to be grasped by children. Modern man no longer understands the dogmatic language of the 16th century.<sup>4</sup>

What are the reasons for Calvin's replacing his first catechism by the second? Though the Reformer does not give us an explicit explanation it is possible to discover several causes. It is almost certain that the catechism of 1537 proved itself unsatisfactory in the actual instruction of children. This may be inferred from several changes in form and in the matter dealt with. The older manual containing 39 paragraphs of unequal length is less adequate for catechetical teaching than the revised edition consisting of 55 lessons or 'Sundays'. The dialogue form with questions by the minister and answers by the pupil is an adequate form for youth-instruction. Various subjects treated at some length in the first catechism are dropped in 1541, obviously because they are felt to be too difficult for children or not basic for their instruction (e.g. election and predestination, church discipline, human traditions, magistrate).

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1) H. Champendal, *Examen Critique des Catéchismes de Luther, Calvin* Heidelberg, Osterwald et Saurin, Genève 1858, p. 58

2) Champendal, *op.cit.*; Boegner, *op.cit.* p.86.

3) Kampschulte, *Joh. Calvin*, Leipzig 1869, p. 458.

4) Boegner concludes that in our time the disciple of Christ ought to put himself under the royal law of love instead of under the Decalogue, *op.cit.* p. 87-91; see also Champendal, *op.cit.* p.36 ff.

The reversal of Creed and Law however can hardly be explained from the practical point of view. It seems that here we have to take into account two other factors, i.e. the influence of the Reformers at Strasbourg and Calvin's own theology.

In Strasbourg there existed since 1534 a "Short written explanation for children"<sup>1</sup> probably written by Bucer<sup>2</sup> which was followed in 1537 by a "Shorter catechism"<sup>3</sup>. If we compare the "Short written explanation" with Calvin's later catechism there appear striking similarities in structure and expression.<sup>4</sup> For our purpose it is especially interesting to note that in Bucer's catechism the dealing with the Creed precedes that with the Law.<sup>5</sup> According to Courvoisier<sup>6</sup> this sequence occurs for the first time in the history of the Reformation in Capito's

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- 1) see A. Ernst und J. Adam, *Katechetische Geschichte des Elsasses bis zur Revolution*, Strassburg 1897, p. 42 ff.: "Kurtze schriftliche erklärang für die Kinder und anghönden der gemeinen artickeln unsers christlichen glaubens der zehen gebott, des Vatter unsers. Hierin findestu einseltigen christlichen bericht aller stücken die einem christen nutz und not zu wissen seind. Durch die Prediger und diener der Gemeine zu Strassburg."
  - 2) Ernst/Adam, op.cit. p. 71.
  - 3) "Der kürtzter Katechismus und erklärang der XII stücken christlichs Glaubens, des Vatter unsers und der zehen gepotten. Für die Schüler und andere Kinder Strassburg. Durch die Prediger daselbst gestellt MDXXXVII."

Ernst and Adam believed that this shorter catechism was lost, but since then two copies were discovered in Germany; see Johann Michael Reu, *Quellen zur Geschichte des kirchlichen Unterrichts*, I I 1 p.6. The shorter catechism is reprinted in Reu I I 1 p. 67 ff.

- 4) cf. M.J. Courvoisier, *Les catéchismes de Genève et de Strasbourg*, in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français*, 1935, p. 105-121, who comes to the conclusion: "Le second catéchisme de Calvin est nettement dépendant du catéchisme de Bucer." p. 118
- 5) In the "Shorter Catechism" the Creed is still in the first place, but the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer are reversed. There is however nothing to be discovered in the catechism which would explain this change. The interpretation of Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue are given without any hint as to their inner relation.
- 6) op.cit. p. 111

"Kinderbericht und Fragstick von gemeinen Punckten christlichen Glaubens", published in 1527.<sup>1</sup>

It would of course be rash to conclude that in his second catechism Calvin merely copied Bucer as he had followed Luther in the first one. But as Calvin was not satisfied with his "Instruction" of 1537, and yet probably still used it at Strasbourg, it can easily be imagined that he investigated the method of the catechetical instruction in the German speaking congregation of that town, and thus came to know and estimate Bucer's catechisms. If this be the case, then he must have discovered that the placing of the Creed before the Law was more consistent with his own theological outlook. This is evident from three points of view.

In the first place we have to take into account that Calvin started his catechism with the knowledge of God as main end of man's destiny. In his "Instruction" of 1537 he had to follow a somewhat complicated course from the outset mentioned above to the first principal part on the Law. After the introduction of the knowledge of God we should expect God to be the main subject of consideration, but presently man, sin and death are put into the centre and the question arises how we are restored to salvation and life; whereupon follows the treatment of the Law. In the "Formulaire" of 1541 the development is much simpler and straightforward: Knowledge of God means primarily to know him as Father and Saviour, and as salvation comes through Christ we have to know Jesus Christ who is witnessed in the Apostolic Creed.

The second point concerns Calvin's conception of the Law. God's law is connected with his covenant. His grace precedes the promulgation of the commandments. In the "Instruction" the prologue to the Decalogue

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1) cf. Ernst and Adam, op.cit. p. 23 ff.

is clearly understood in this sense: "Car par telle b nignit  qu'il a une fois retir  le peuple juda que de la servitude de Egypte, aussi pareillement il d livre tous ses serviteurs de la perp tuelle Egypte des fid les, c'est- -dire de la puissance de p ch ."<sup>1</sup> If thus the law is given to those who are saved from sin, it is only natural that the way of salvation be treated before the Law.

Finally we have to take into consideration Calvin's view of the different functions of the Law. Unlike Luther he holds that the Law has the office of teacher for Christian life.<sup>2</sup> Already in his "Instruction" he states that the use of the Law is very different for Christians from what it can be apart from faith. It becomes a lamp which guides our steps and is called our wisdom and our discipline.<sup>3</sup> Hence as Calvin is interested especially in the function of the law with relation to the faithful, it is only consistent to treat the matter of faith in the first instance.

We may thus conclude that Calvin in Strasbourg took notice of Bucer's catechism and, as he was not satisfied with his "Instruction", among other things accepted Bucer's arrangement of the main parts<sup>4</sup> for his future catechism, all the more as the sequence Creed-Law was in better conformity with his theological outlook than the sequence Law-Creed.<sup>5</sup>

1) Rilliet, op.cit. p. 16

2) In the 'Institutio' this is called the main function of the Law, see below p.376

3) Rilliet, op.cit. p. 41

4) but not following the change in the second edition, see p. 357 n.5.

5) Boegner attributes this important change in arrangement mainly to educational and psychological reasons. "Calvin comprit, au cours de ses exp riences p dagogiques   l' glise fran aise de Strasbourg, qu'il valait mieux ne pas demander   ces enfants de traverser les angoisses du p ch  avant d'accepter la gr ce; il pr f ra commencer par la gr ce et faire conna tre d'abord aux enfants la grandeur de l'amour de Dieu manifest  en J sus-Christ." op.cit. p. 59.

"J'ajoute que ce nouveau plan r pondait mieux aussi aux circonstances

## 2. The Decalogue in the Catechism of the Church of Geneva.

### a) The place of the Decalogue in the Catechism.

In our previous section we have already depicted the arrangement of Calvin's catechism published in 1541 which replaced that of 1537. Unlike the former catechism which in its ordering agrees with Luther's catechism, the "Catechism of the Church of Geneva" treats first the Creed and only in the second place the Law. The arrangement is very clear and consistent. To honour God implies faith, obedience, prayer and confession; hence Calvin first discusses the Creed, then successively the Law, the Lord's Prayer, the Word of God and the Sacraments.

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que venait de traverser l'Eglise de Genève au moment où Calvin reprit sa direction. En face des Libertins, il fallait, non pas 'poser le fondement en insistant sur le péché de l'homme rebelle à la volonté de Dieu', mais montrer, avec plus de force que jamais, que la foi est vaine lorsqu'elle ne détermine pas l'obéissance de la volonté et que la Loi demeure, jusqu'à la mort, la règle de vie à laquelle le croyant doit se soumettre par amour." op.cit. p.60.

These two reasons given by Boegner are not convincing. We do not know anything about educational and psychological concerns, but from the previous section it is obvious that the reversal of Law and Creed agrees with Calvin's doctrine. Boegner's second point is still less convincing. Luther in similar circumstances would probably have been confirmed in his conviction that the Law had definitely to precede the Gospel. See p. 321 and 331!

In this connexion Boegner (op.cit. p. 60-61) enters into discussion with a certain E. Vaucher (Rapport sur le Concours, etc. p.40) who contends that the catechism of 1541 is merely a logical development of the initial statement that the aim of man's life is the knowledge of God. In spite of Boegner's disagreement with Vaucher we must admit that there is of course a great deal of logic in Calvin's approach, but it is the logic of God's dealing with man and not just the logic of the Reformer.



The link between Creed and Law is formed by the discussion whether man can be justified by good works. This question is denied<sup>1</sup>, nevertheless the good works are given an important place in the sequel of faith: It is impossible to be justified by good works, but it is equally impossible to believe in order to be justified without doing good works. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of the Gospel is comprised in these two points: faith and repentance.<sup>2</sup> In the following item Calvin gives his definition of repentance: "Repentance is a displeasure of the evil, and love of the good, proceeding from the fear of God, which induces us to mortify our flesh in order to be governed and guided by the Holy Spirit to the service of God." This is thus the second point in our honouring God: obedience and service. The rule given us for this governing is the Law, the Decalogue.

#### b) The function of the Law.

At the end of the interpretation of the Decalogue and the double commandment of love, which show our service and obedience, the minister asks: "Do you speak in general of all people or only of the faithful?"<sup>3</sup> The pupil has to answer that man who is not regenerated by the Spirit of God could not start to do the least thing, and even if he did something he would none the less be condemned, as he has not kept the whole Law.<sup>4</sup> The minister then concludes that the law has a double office according to two kinds of people.<sup>5</sup> As to the unbelievers its only use is to blame and to make them inexcusable before God. This is what Paul calls the ministry of death and damnation.<sup>6</sup> For the faithful it has a very

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1) see above p. 354.

2) Qu. 127: "La Foy donc, non seulement ne nous rend pas nonchalans à bonnes oeuvres, mais est la racine dont elles sont produictes. - Il est ainsi: et pour ceste cause la doctrine de l'Evangile est comprise en ces deux pointz: assavoir, Foy et penitence."

3) Qu. 225.

4) Qu. 226

5) Par cela il faut conclurre, que la Loy a double office: selon qu'il y a deux especes d'hommes.

6) 2 Cor. 3,6.9

different function.<sup>1</sup> In question 228 Calvin displays the three uses of the Law for the faithful:

- 1) The Law reveals that they cannot be justified by works; in humiliating them it makes them disposed to seek their salvation in Jesus Christ.
- 2) As the Law asks more than they are able to do it exhorts them to ask the Lord to give them strength and ability, further to recognize themselves as always guilty so that they do not become proud.
- 3) For them it is like a rein which keeps them in the fear of God.<sup>2</sup>

In this mortal life we shall never fulfil the Law, nevertheless it is not superfluous that the Law asks from us such a perfection. For it shows us the aim towards which we have to tend, so that each of us, according to the grace God has given him, endeavours assiduously to strive and to advance day by day.<sup>3</sup>

#### c) The interpretation of the Decalogue.

In his interpretation of the Decalogue Calvin has to face a problem which did not trouble Luther, as the latter had transformed the "Decalogue" of Exodus 20 into "Ten Commandments" which allegedly were written in every man's heart and thus identical with natural law. Calvin however who literally follows the text of Ex. 20 has to deal with the question, "Which parts of the Decalogue apply to the Christians and which are confined to the Jews?" This problem is solved by

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- 1) Envers les fideles elle a bien autre usage. Qu. 227.
  - 2) "Premierement, d'autant qu'elle leur demonstre qu'ilz ne se peuvent iustificier par leurs oeuvres: en les humiliant, elle les dispose à chercher leur salut en Iesus Christ (Rom. 5,18-21): puis apres, entant qu'elle requiert plus qu'il ne leur est possible de faire, elle les admoneste de prier le Seigneur, qu'il leur doint la force et le pouvoir (Gal. 4,6): et cependant de se reconnoistre tousiours coupables, afin de ne s'en orgueillir point. Tiercement, elle leur est comme une bride, pour les retenir en la crainte de Dieu." Qu. 228.
  - 3) Qu. 229.

the introduction of allegorical interpretation<sup>1</sup> and by the discrimination between moral and ceremonial law.

The question arises already in relation to the prologue of the Decalogue. The minister asks the pupil: "But what he says after the deliverance from Egypt, does he not address himself particularly to the people of Israel?" Answers the pupil: "Concerning the body this is true. But it belongs generally to us all as he has delivered our souls from the spiritual captivity of sin and from the tyranny of the devil."<sup>2</sup> The same method of allegory is applied to the promise following the fifth commandment.<sup>3</sup> As to the children of Israel it speaks of the land of Canaan, but now we have to take the word more generally. The whole earth is God's possession. Hence wherever we live it is He who gives us our dwelling place.

The interpretation of the Fourth Commandment is more complicated, as the allegorical method is combined with the distinction between ceremonial and moral law. "The observance of rest is part of the ceremonies of the Old Testament law and therefore abolished by Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> As far as this commandment is ceremonial it belongs thus to the Jews and is given for the time of the Old Testament.

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- 1) Allegory for Calvin does not mean the same as for Origen; it has rather to be seen as the interpretation of the "signs, types, shadows and figures" which point to some signified matter. cf. H.H. Wolf, *Die Einheit des Bundes, Das Verhältnis von Altem und Neuem Testament bei Calvin*, Neukirchen 1958, p. 128-9: "Was nun noch bei Calvin als Allegorie erscheint... ist nicht etwa als *sensus mysticus* im Sinn des Origenes zu verstehen, sondern gemäss den Intentionen Calvins als *sensus literalis*, weil der Text von sich aus signifikativen Sinn hat, weil die Figuren und Typen nicht um ihrer selbst willen dastehen, sondern um ihres bezeichnenden Charakters willen gedeutet werden sollen."
  - 2) Qu. 138. cf. CR 24,210: "Hoc quidem in nos proprie non competit: sed sanctiore vinculo sibi nos obligavit per manum unigeniti filii: quem ideo mortuum esse et resurrexisse Paulus docet ut vivis dominetur et mortuis (Rom. 14,9). Ita non unius tantum populi nunc est Deus, sed gentium omnium, quas in ecclesiam suam communi adoptione vocavit."
  - 3) Qu. 193
  - 4) Qu. 158, cf. Qu. 181.

But besides its ceremonial significance the commandment is enacted for three reasons<sup>1</sup>: 1) for the figuration of the spiritual rest, 2) for the ecclesiastical order, 3) for the easing of the servants.

The first of these three points is thus attained by means of allegory. The spiritual rest means to desist from our own actions so that the Lord may act in us.<sup>2</sup> In question 175 Calvin gives the rule for the allegorical method: It is not necessary that the figure in every respect be similar to the truth, it suffices if there is some resemblance. The number seven signifies perfection and perpetuity.<sup>3</sup>

As a matter of fact we ought to meditate on the works of God every day, but because of our infirmity there is set apart a special day. This is the ecclesiastical order of the second point.<sup>4</sup> Finally we derive from this commandment an order of the community, i.e. that those who are under authority of others be given some recreation.<sup>5</sup> This somewhat complicated interpretation of the Fourth Commandment might be represented in the following way:

#### Fourth Commandment

ceremonial	allegorical	basis for
significance	significance	a) Church order
for Jews only	for Christians	b) social order

On the whole it appears that Calvin interprets the Decalogue in a spiritual sense. Repeatedly he stresses that the commandments do not concern outward acts only, but pertain to the heart<sup>6</sup>. Several commandments are given a positive sense at the end of the respective explanation<sup>7</sup> and the positive intention of God's will comes out clearly in the short interpretation of the double commandment of love.<sup>8</sup> The

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1) Qu. 170: "Pour figurer le Repos spirituel; pour la police ecclesiastique; et pour le soulagement des serviteurs."

2) Qu. 173

3) Qu. 176

4) Qu. 178; cf. Qu. 183

5) Qu. 180

6) Qu. 197; 202; 206.

7) Qu. 184; 203.

8) Qu. 217-223.

interpretation of the Decalogue is thus developed in the light of the New Testament, though references to the Gospel or to Jesus Christ are very sparse<sup>1</sup>. Christ appears neither as teacher nor as example for the Christian life.

### 3. Covenant and Law in Calvin's theology<sup>2</sup>.

#### a) The unity of the Covenants.

In order to understand Calvin's conception of Law properly we have to consider his teaching about the Covenants. According to him the Covenant with the Fathers is not different from the Covenant with us in regard to its substance and matter. They differ only in their administration.<sup>3</sup> The heading of the 10th chapter (Book 2) of the Institutes runs as follows: "De similitudine Veteris et Novi testamenti". But Calvin sees more than a similarity between the covenants, as appears in his pertinent definition and also in another sentence in the same paragraph: "... in similitudine vel potius unitate..."<sup>4</sup>

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1) Qu. 184; 203.

2) see H.H. Wolf, Die Einheit des Bundes, Das Verhältniss von Altem und Neuem Testament bei Calvin, Neukirchen, 1958.

3) "Patrium omnium foedus adeo substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro differt, ut unum prorsus atque idem sit; administratio tamen variat." II 10,2

4) cf. CR 28,288: "Il est vray qu'en substance aujourdhuy Dieu ne fait autre alliance avec nous, que celle qu'il a faite anciennement avec les Iuifs: mais tant y a qu'il parle beaucoup plus priveement, il se declare nostre Dieu et pere, et nous en donne une certitude beaucoup plus grande en nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, que les Iuifs ne pouvoient pas avoir sous les ombres et figures de la Loy. Il est vray que les peres anciens n'ont point esté sauvez par autre moyen que celui que nous avons, cest assavoir qu'ils fussent le peuple de Dieu: car cela emporte que Dieu les tenoit pour ses enfans, et ils ont eu leur salut fondé en Iesus Christ comme nous: mais cela a esté fait d'une façon obscure, qu'ils ont regardé de loin ce qui leur estoit offert. De nostre costé, puis qu'en la personne de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ Dieu s'est tellement approché de nous, que nous sommes unis avec luy, et que nous avons la verité des figures anciennes."

Calvin then points to the facts which according to him constitute this unity between the Covenants:

- 1) The Jews have been adopted as children for the hope of immortality, and the belief in this adoption has been confirmed by revelation, Law, and Prophets.
- 2) The Covenant in which God reconciled them with himself is not based on their merits, but exclusively on God's mercy.
- 3) They had and knew Christ as their mediator, by whom they were joined to God and shared in his promises.

It is thus the substance and the matter<sup>1</sup> which constitute the unity of the covenants, and we may surmise that Calvin in the three points mentioned above gives the explanation of his conceptions "substance and matter".<sup>2</sup>

Calvin's terminology varies to some degree in his interpretation of Jer. 31,31. He asks why God promises a new covenant, if the first covenant is eternal? Doubtless, he declares, this promise refers only to the form and not to the substance. Now it is interesting how Calvin defines the conceptions "form and substance": The form consists not only in words, but primarily in Christ, in the regeneration through the Holy Spirit and in the whole outward manner of teaching. The substance however is the doctrine, because God does not put forward anything in the Gospel which is not contained in the Law. Concerning the doctrine, God has spoken since the beginning of time in such a manner that he later did not need to change a syllable. As to the substance of the doctrine, the Gospel has added nothing to the Law,

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1) 'substantia' and 'res'

2) H.H. Wolf, op.cit. p.23-24, considers especially the "gratuita adoptio" as the substantia and res of the Covenant, but he thinks also of Calvin's terminology of the Lord's supper where Christ is called the substance of all Sacraments. "Man kann... jedenfalls vermuten, es handelt sich bei substantia und res des Bundes um Christus selbst."



therefore the new covenant can only be new in form, as Christ was not yet revealed.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the revelation of Christ which replaced the shadows of the Law there are two other changes in the new form of the Covenant: God regenerated the faithful by his Spirit so that the doctrine did not remain a letter but entered the hearts, forming them to obedience, and the outward manner of teaching<sup>2</sup> became new, as God now speaks with us face to face and not from behind a veil.<sup>3</sup> Jer. 31,33 is for Calvin a confirmation of his tenet: it is not said that God will give a new Law, but that he will write the Law into the hearts. The novelty is thus not in the substance, but only in the form.<sup>4</sup> To write the Law into the hearts signifies: the hearts are formed in such a manner that the Law governs there so that there will be no emotion of the heart which would not assent to and agree with the doctrine of the Law.<sup>5</sup>

- 1) "Forma autem haec non tantum posita est in verbis, sed primum in Christo, deinde in gratia spiritus sancti, et tota docendi ratione externa: substantia autem eadem manet. Substantiam intelligo doctrinam, quia Deus in evangelio nihil profert, quod lex non contineat. Videmus ergo Deum ab initio sic loquutum esse, ne syllabam quidem postea mutaverit, quantum attinet ad doctrinae summam. Complexus est enim in lege regulam perfecte vivendi... Quum igitur evangelium nihil addiderit ad legem, quantum attinet ad substantiam doctrinae, veniendum est, sicuti iam dixi, ad formam ipsam, quoniam nondum patefactus erat Christus, percussit Deus foedus novum, ubi sancivit per filium suum quidquid sub lege adumbratum fuerat." CR 38,688.

In this exposition Christ is not represented as the substance of the Covenant, but as part of its form, and it is therefore questionable whether Wolf's relating the conception "substance" in Calvin's doctrine of the Covenant with the same term in his doctrine of the Lord's supper can be maintained (see p. 366 n.2). Without any doubt Calvin understands Christ as the basis and the aim of the Covenant, but it is striking that it is the doctrine which is equated with the substance of the Covenant and not Christ!

- 2) Ratio externa docendi nova fuit CR 38,689.  
 3) 2 Cor. 3,13 4) CR 38,691  
 5) CR 38,692

If God's covenant is considered from this point of view it is self-evident that Calvin is compelled to stress the unity of the covenants with the result that he can ultimately acknowledge only one covenant, be it then with different administrations, or, as he explains elsewhere, a dispensation according to a certain economy and order.<sup>1</sup>

The Covenant was instituted with Abraham, and all the following "covenants" with the Fathers were only repetitions, renewals or corroborations of the one eternal and inviolable Covenant with Abraham.<sup>2</sup> Even the "New Covenant" of Jer. 31,31 is not new in the sense that it would be another covenant. We do not hope for a salvation different from that promised to Abraham concerning his blessed descendants (seed)<sup>3</sup>. "All the promises which are given to the faithful from the beginning of the world have thus their foundation in Christ. Therefore Moses and the Prophets mean Christ wherever they speak about reconciliation with God, about hope of salvation or any other favour."<sup>4</sup> As Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, the faithful of the Old Covenant look to the same Christ as those of the New Covenant.<sup>5</sup> In his interpretation of Mt. 5,17 Calvin declares that the "New Covenant" was actually the aim of the first one, God made the first Covenant eternal.<sup>6</sup>

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1) II 10,20

2) "Sequitur ergo, primum foedus fuisse inviolabile: deinde iam ante percusseret foedus suum cum Abraham: et lex fuit confirmatio illius foederis." CR 38,688.

See further H.H. Wolf, op.cit. p. 25, who refers to the pertinent passages in Calvin's writings.

3) CR 38, 687 f.

4) CR 50,23

5) CR 55,190

6) "Pollicitus quidem fuerat Deus novum foedus Christi adventu, sed simul ostenderat, minime diversum fore a primo, quin potius hunc esse finem, ut foedus, quod ab initio pepigerat cum suis, in perpetuum sanciret." CR 45,171

b) The different administrations of the Covenant.

From the point of view of the substance and the matter there is thus only one covenant, but there are different administrations of it. If the faithful of the Old Testament "had and knew Christ" as their mediator, they had and knew him not quite in the same way as the faithful of the New Testament. Calvin states five differences which stand in relation to the form of administration but do not concern the substance:

- 1) In the Old Covenant the people could look at the heavenly inheritance and taste of it in the guise of earthly goods, whereas now God has revealed this inheritance of the coming life more clearly. The faithful of the Old Covenant contemplated as in a mirror that future inheritance which is shown to us in a direct way in the Gospel. God's indirect dealing with the Israelites is in accordance with their stage, i.e. they were still in childhood and therefore not able to manage their inheritance.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) The Old Testament showed only a picture, a shadow of the solid reality (body) which was to come, whereas the New Testament exhibits the present truth and the solid reality. The ceremonies and offerings in the Old Testament were confirmations of the covenant, but they had to cease when the covenant was made new and eternal in the blood of Jesus Christ. So the Law and the Prophets pointed to the future wisdom as to a light shining in the distance. But now we can point to Christ himself, God's kingdom is opened.<sup>2</sup>
- 3) The Old Testament is attached to the letter<sup>3</sup> as it was promulgated without the working of the Spirit. The New Testament however is spiritual because God has carved it in the human heart through His Spirit. Following 2 Cor. 3 Calvin states further contrasts: The

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1) II 11,1-3

2) II 11,4-6 cf. 9,3

3) literale

Old Testament brings death, the New Testament life, the Old Testament is an office of condemnation, the New Testament is the ministry of justice, revealing God's mercy. The last contrast, transitoriness of the Old, perpetuity of the New, according to Calvin concerns only the ceremonies in the Law.<sup>1</sup>

- 4) The Old Testament is called a testament of servitude producing fear in the heart. The New Testament however is a testament of liberty because it strengthens the hearts with trust and certainty.<sup>2</sup>
- 5) Before the coming of Christ God had chosen only one people in which his covenant of grace was contained. But when the mediator between God and man became manifest, God's mercy was proclaimed to all peoples: the calling of the heathen is thus a glorious sign which marks the superiority of the New Testament over against the Old.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of all these differences Calvin does not acknowledge a substantial variety between the Old and the New Covenants. If he nevertheless speaks of two covenants he does so not from the point of view of substance, but only from that of administration. His doctrine therefore allows us only in a very limited degree to speak about a development in the history of salvation<sup>4</sup>. As far as Calvin acknowledges such a development it pertains only to the different administrations of the one covenant. He conceives of an increase in clarity and transparency of revelation until the rise of the sun of justice.<sup>5</sup>

#### c) Covenant and Law.

The Covenant implies that God pledges the chosen people to obedience, but in the first place God pledges himself to us. "Who are we that our Lord descends so low as to make a Covenant with us, promising to be our Father and Saviour...? God asks of course that each of us offer himself to him and that we renounce all liberty in order to be subject

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1) II 11,7-8

2) II 11,9

3) II 11,11-12

4) heilsgeschichtliche Entwicklung

5) see H.H. Wolf, op.cit. p. 64 f. and 69 ff.

to him and stay peacefully under his direction. But before he asks this he gives himself to us."<sup>1</sup> The Covenant with Abraham is not based on the dignity or the merits of that people, but exclusively on God's free goodness. Therefore this covenant remained firm and immutable even when the people became unworthy.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that for Calvin God's act of grace precedes the promulgation of the Law. The Covenant comprehends gift and demand, promise and Law.

By the conception "Law" Calvin not only understands the Ten Commandments which form a rule of conduct how to live piously and justly, but the form of worship<sup>3</sup> which has been transmitted by God through the hand of Moses. As Moses time and again reminds the Jews of the Covenant of grace established with the patriarchs, it is as if he were sent in order to renew that Covenant. The purpose of the Law was to keep the souls in expectation until the coming of Christ.<sup>4</sup> So both the ceremonial and moral Law pointed to Christ who was the fulfilment and the aim of the Law. The Law is thus the true and unique preparation for the attainment to Christ. Therefore the Law cannot be separated from the Covenant. If Paul sometimes takes the Law in and by itself, he does so only in order to refute the error of the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin uses the term "Law" in different senses, but in every respect the Law is related to Christ who is the foundation of the Covenant. This is most evident where the Law is taken in the comprehensive sense "Law and Prophets" whereby we can speak of the "promises of the Law."<sup>6</sup> If understood in this sense the Gospel does not replace the Law, opening a new way of salvation, but it affirms the promises of the Law and adds the solid reality itself to the shadow. If however we take the law in the sense of "commandment" with the thought of attaining to

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1) CR 28,513

3) forma religionis

5) II 7,2

6) cf. II 11,7: The Law at intervals contains quite a number of promises of God's mercy: but they stem from another source and are not to be considered if one wants to speak of the proper use of the Law.

2) CR 28,549

4) II 7,1

righteousness by the keeping of it (which is impossible), then it is adequate if Paul opposes the righteousness of the Law to that of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

For Calvin the ceremonial law is special evidence that the Law of Moses was given for the renewal of the Covenant. The ceremonies have no meaning in themselves. The whole worship according to the Law would be ridiculous if considered in and by itself and if it did not contain the shadows and images corresponding to the truth. All these commandments were focussed towards a spiritual aim: Israel was called to be a kingdom of Priests but this call could of course only be realized by a more effective atonement than that of the blood of animals. Consequently the ceremonies were instituted in order to draw the heart to the spiritual worship.<sup>2</sup> This function of the ceremonial law makes it evident that with the coming of Christ the ceremonies are abrogated, not as to their effect, but as to their use. They were shadows of the future reality and disappear in the brightness of the revealed light.<sup>3</sup>

The moral law is identified with the Decalogue. This is evident from the heading of chapter 8 in Book II of the Institutes: "Legis moralis explicatio", which contains the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. But Calvin understands the Decalogue in the light of the double commandment of love. Therefore, where he distinguishes between the three different kinds of Law<sup>4</sup> he can give the following definition: "The moral law consists of two main parts: the first part demands the worship of God with pure faith and piety, the second part to embrace men with sincere love. This is the true and eternal rule of justice prescribed for all peoples and all times, if they want to arrange their lives according to God's will."

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1) II 9,4

2) II 7,1

3) II 7,16; cf. IV 20,15 and CR 45,171: "Quantum ad caeremonias spectat, licet quiddam adventitium censerri possint, solo tamen usu fuerunt abrogatae: significatio vero magis comprobata fuit." On this subject see further H.H. Wolf, op.cit. p. 77 ff.

4) IV 20,15



Calvin connects the Ten Commandments with Rom. 10,4 and 2 Cor. 3,6.17: Christ is called the fulfilment or the end of the Law, because the righteousness expressed in the commandments is taught in vain as long as Christ does not confer it to us by gratuitous imputation and by the spirit of regeneration. The Lord is the Spirit who gives life to the letter which in and by itself would kill.<sup>1</sup>

The moral law promises eternal life for those who keep it. But as nobody is able to keep it perfectly this righteousness cannot be attained to by man, so that instead of life he faces death.<sup>2</sup> If we look only at the Law we can but despair because it condemns and curses all of us and deters us far from the blessings which it promises to those who keep it. But it is this experience which prepares us for the acceptance of God's grace in faith.<sup>3</sup> So it is not only the ceremonial law which points to Christ, as the shadow to the solid reality, but also the moral law shares in the function of a tutor which leads to the Lord.

The judicial law was given to the Jews for the political order. Its purpose was to preserve the love which is commanded in God's eternal Law, nevertheless it had something which is different from that commandment of love. Therefore every other people is free to make laws which are useful to it, but its laws must agree with the eternal rule of love, so that they have actually the same intention though their form may be different.<sup>4</sup>

Calvin then distinguishes between the fixed form (constitutio) and its equity (aequitas) which is the basis of the fixed form. As the equity is natural there can be only one for all. The fixed forms of the law however may vary according to the circumstances on which they depend. "It is a fact that God's law, which we call 'moral law', is nothing else than the witness of the natural law and of that conscience which is ingraved by God in the human heart, and therefore this equity which

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1) II 7,2  
3) II 7,4

2) II 7,3  
4) IV 20,15

we speak of, according to its intention, is wholly prescribed in this law; therefore it must be the only scope, rule and limit for all the laws."<sup>1</sup>

If some complain that the judicial law of Moses is abrogated and replaced by other laws, Calvin answers that we cannot speak of abrogation of a law which was never given to us. God had not delivered it by the hand of Moses so that it might be promulgated to all nations and be enacted everywhere, but he wanted to be the lawgiver of this particular people, adjusting the law to their respective circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

In his interpretation of the books Exodus - Deuteronomy<sup>3</sup> Calvin does not follow the order of the Biblical text, but in the first part he collects all the texts relating to the law and in the second part deals with the historical passages in the books of Moses. All the Commandments are subsumed under the precepts of the Decalogue. In his preface to this commentary he gives the reason for his peculiar approach. He confesses that in the Ten Commandments everything is comprehended which concerns the shaping of life. But as not everybody is able to discover the true relation between the various precepts outside the Decalogue to this code, he wants to help the reader to a real understanding by connecting every commandment, according to its content, with the respective precept of the Decalogue.

With the commandments of the first table Calvin connects similar precepts from other passages and in "appendices" he deals with the ceremonial enactments. The commandments of the second table are interpreted similarly, but the appendices here contain the judicial enactments.

This interpretation of the commandments is preceded by a "preface to the Law", where Calvin collects and interprets the sayings which commend and praise the Law,<sup>4</sup> and the whole explanation of the Law concludes

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1) IV 20,16

3) CR 24 and 25

2) IV 20,16

4) CR 24,209 ff.

with the texts which reveal the purpose and use of the Law, including promises and threats. But he emphasizes that the commandments collected in the appendices are only auxiliary means in order to explain and stress the Ten Commandments and may not be considered as completions of the Decalogue which is a perfect rule of life.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. The various functions of the Law.

Calvin distinguishes three functions or uses of the Law:

- a) Its first office is to show us God's justice, i.e. what is acceptable to God, and then to remind and convince us of our injustice and to condemn us. So the Law frees us from our arrogance, pride and fancied righteousness.<sup>2</sup> It is like a mirror in which we perceive our impotence, iniquity and malediction. This is the law which effects anger and kills; we have to do with its office of death.<sup>3</sup> The impious experience only this use of the law: they fall into desperation and perdition because of their obstinacy. For the children of God however there must be a purpose of instruction in this first use of the law. God wants us to flee naked and empty to his mercy and to receive the righteousness which is offered us in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

1) "Sequitur itaque, ad regulam bene recteque vivendi, praeter decem verba, desiderari nihil posse." CR 24,7.

"Car comme desia nous avons dit, la Loy des dix parolles est une reigle infallible. Quand nous avons ce sommaire-la, nous avons la volonté de Dieu qui nous est toute testifiée. Et nous faut compasser toutes les loix particulieres à ces dix commandemens: c'est la vraye touche, à la quelle il nous faut examiner, comme chacune Loy speciale doit estre prinse et exposee. Car iamais nous n'en viendrons à bout, que le tout ne soit là rapporté. Et pourquoy? Il y a une perfection de iustice en ces dix commandemens que Dieu a donné aux deux tables. Puis qu'ainsi est donc, nous ne pourrons iamais faillir, quand nous viendrons nous enquerir: Or ça, voici une loy, est-elle du service de Dieu, ou de la seconde table?" CR 28,107

2) II 7,6

3) II 7,7

4) II 7,8-9. Calvin considers Rom. 10,4 important because there Paul shows that the Law points and aims at Christ. Therefore the Law

- b) The second office of the Law applies to people who do not care about justice and righteousness. If they hear the threats of the Law they are at least restrained by the fear of punishment. Their hearts are far from obedience, they hate the law and curse the lawgiver, but fear compels them to observe the law in an outward way. The second function of the Law is important for the maintaining of human society because it prevents anarchy. Moreover this education is valuable also for God's children as long as they lack the calling of the Spirit of sanctification. Paul alludes to the second use of the Law in 1 Tim. 1,9 f.

To the first and second uses of the Law applies Paul's statement that the Law is a tutor to Christ.<sup>2</sup> Those who, because of their trust in their own righteousness, cannot receive Christ's grace, as well as those who do not care for righteousness, are led to Christ by the education of the Law.<sup>3</sup>

- c) The third office of the Law is paramount and is more closely connected with its proper purpose.<sup>4</sup> It has its place with the faithful in whose hearts God's Spirit already works and reigns. As a matter of fact God's Law is written and carved in their hearts by God's finger, i.e. by the direction of the Spirit they are so affected and animated that they want to obey God. Nevertheless the Law is useful to them in two respects:

- 1) The Law is the best means by which they may learn God's will and in which they are confirmed in the knowledge of it. Nobody

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can only be understood properly if it is constantly related to Christ. "Imo quidquid doceat lex, quidquid praecipiat, quidquid promittat, semper Christum habet pro scopo: ergo in ipsum dirigenda sunt omnes partes." CR 49,196. cf. CR 50,34: "Interea discamus, ne in lege quidem ac toto Dei verbo quidquam esse lucis sine Christo iustitiae sole." "Lex ipsis involuta est instar labyrinthi, donec ad suum finem referatur, qui est Christus."

1) II 7,10

2) Gal. 3,24

3) II 7,11

4) "Tertius usus, qui et praecipuus est, et in proprium Legis finem propius spectat." II 7,12

has entered into this wisdom so far that he should not be able to make new progress to purer understanding of God's will by the daily instruction through the Law.

- 2) We need not only teaching, but also exhortation. Through frequent meditation on the Law God's servant will be compelled to obedience and kept away from the slippery way of sin. Although the saints in spirit reach out with eagerness towards God's justice, none the less they still are burdened with the laziness of the flesh. So the Law for the flesh is like a whip which incites it to work like the whipping of a lazy and slow donkey.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin's teaching about the triplex usus legis in the Institutes can be summarized as follows:

<u>Usus legis:</u>	<u>simile:</u>	<u>applies to the</u>
1) theologicus	mirror	self-righteous
2) civilis (politicus)	rein	unrighteous
3) normativus (didacticus, in renatis)		faithful
a) teaching		
b) exhorting	whip	

If we compare the definitions and distinctions between the different offices of the Law in the Catechism of the Church of Geneva with that in the Institutes, it appears that the latter is clearer, more consistent and comprehensive. Though in the catechism the third use of the Law is already in Calvin's mind as the main use<sup>2</sup>, it does not come out clearly in his pertinent definition.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of Calvin's clear definition and analysis in the Institutes it is rather confusing if an interpreter suggests to reduce the law as understood by Calvin to two functions only.<sup>4</sup> Göhler contends that the

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1) II 7,12

2) Qu. 131; 225; 229; 230.

3) Qu. 227-228

4) Göhler Alfred, Calvins Lehre von der Heiligung, München 1934, p.117 ff.

usus civilis is only a particular application of the usus normativus and he finds his limitation to two functions of the Law confirmed by the Catechismus Genevensis which speaks of a duplex legis officium.

This conclusion from Calvin's terminology in the Catechism does not stand up to scrutiny. It is true that Calvin there uses the term "double office", but in another sense than later in the Institutes. This conception is applied with regard to two kinds of men: a) the unbelievers, b) the faithful.<sup>1</sup> In the following question Calvin distinguishes three functions of the Law with regard to the faithful.<sup>2</sup> This presentation of the matter would suggest rather four functions of the Law instead of only two!

If Göhler, in connexion with his subject (sanctification), prefers to consider two uses only he is of course justified in doing so, as Calvin in the Institutes does not connect the usus civilis with the life of the faithful. For the same reason the Reformer himself occasionally distinguishes only two function, sc. when he speaks of the Law with regard to Christians alone.<sup>3</sup> But if Göhler calls the offices of the Law the "usus paedagogicus" and the "usus normativus" (subsuming the usus civilis under the latter) he deviates considerably from Calvin's conception. The Reformer considers the first and second functions of the Law (usus theologicus and usus civilis) together as "paedagogus", whereas the third function (usus normativus) according to him is not connected with the usus civilis.<sup>4</sup>

The reduction of the Law in Calvin's theology to two functions and the introduction of a different terminology only confuses the matter instead of elucidating it.

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1) Qu. 227

2) see page 362

3) Göhler points to Calvin's sermon on 1 Tim. 1,8 (CR 6,80) which he considers a proof of his theory.

4) see p. 375 ff.



##### 5. The continuous function of the moral Law.

From the previous chapter it is obvious that the moral Law (= Ten Commandments) has a continuous function in the faithful, especially as teacher and exhorter. Some inexpert people do not know the difference between the various functions of the Law, therefore they vehemently reject the whole of Moses and dismiss both tables, because they think it not consistent with the state of a Christian to adhere to a teaching which contains the office of death. Such people do not understand that the Law, which can only cause death in the sinners, has an excellent function in the saints. For, if an absolute and perfect pattern of justice is given to us in the Law, we have either no right and just rule for our life or it is wrong to depart from this rule. For there are not several such rules, but only one which is eternal and unchangeable. The Law is thus not limited to only one age, but it is appropriate for every age until the end of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In his Sermon on Deut. 4,44-49 and 5,1-3 Calvin maintains that the words spoken to Israel apply also to Christians. "Ainsi donc notons, que si nous n'avons pas este du temps de Moyse: que ce n'est pas à dire que nous puissions mespriser les remonstrances qu'il a faites, et qui sont contenues en la Loy. Et pourquoy? Car il a parlé à nous: il n'a point seulement parlé à ceste multitude qui fut assemblee en la montagne d'Horeb: mais il a parlé à tout le monde en general...

L'autorite de la Loy ne doit point estre ammoindrie: car elle contient la verite de Dieu qui demeure à tousiours, et qui ne varie point, qui n'est point caduque à la façon des hommes."<sup>2</sup>

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1) II 7,13; cf. CR 26,209: "Il est vray que les ceremonies ne sont plus en usage: tout cela a este mis bas à la venue de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ; mais la doctrine de la Loy, qui contient les promesses de salut: l'alliance par laquelle Dieu choisit ceux qu'il veut avoir de son Eglise, et les tesmoignages de la remission de nos pechez, et puis sa volonte, pour nous monstrier quelle est la vraye reigle de bien vivre, tout cela demeure, et doit estre perpetuel iusques en la fin du monde."

2) CR 26,244-245.

If Christ said that he came to fulfil the Law (i.e. by his teaching, not by his life<sup>1</sup>), then it is clear that the Law has a permanent function and is as unvarying as God's justice.<sup>2</sup>

We have thus to examine carefully in which respect the Law is abrogated and to what extent it is still valid. Paul clearly teaches the abrogation of the Law and Jesus must have proclaimed it as well. This teaching of Jesus caused a misunderstanding on the side of his opponents and compelled Jesus to state his real attitude towards the Law as reported in Mat. 5,17 ff. As a matter of fact the abrogation proclaimed by Jesus and Paul applied only to the fetters of the Law which bound the conscience. After the coming of Christ the Law does not oppose us any longer with its curse and condemnation. We are freed from the servitude and fear caused by the Law, but the Law is not abrogated as to its teaching office. Through Christ the doctrine of the Law remains inviolate, that doctrine which has to prepare us and make us apt for every good work by its teaching, exhorting, blaming and correcting.<sup>3</sup>

After the interpretation of the Ten Commandments in the Institutes Calvin declares that God in his Law has revealed his holy character so clearly that he who would represent with his deeds what is demanded by the Law, would as it were express God's image. The perfect holiness consists in the double commandment of love. The Law therefore does not only impart to us the first principles or beginnings of justice, but the highest perfection.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, at the end of the interpretation of the Mosaic Law<sup>5</sup>, Calvin explains the "summa legis", the double commandment of love. He admits that Moses has not yet connected these two commandments, but Christ, in whose Spirit Moses spoke, has revealed its proper intention.

1) CR 45, 170

2) "Ergo quoad doctrinam, nulla nobis in Christi adventu fingenda est legis abrogatio: nam quum aeterna sit pie sancteque vivendi regula, immutabilem esse oportet, sicut una est ac constans Dei iustitia, quam illic complexus est." CR 45,171.

3) II 7,14-15

4) II 8,51

5) CR 45,170

In the parable of the good Samaritan Christ shows us that the expression "neighbour" includes also the stranger. The commandment to love one's enemy is already found in the Old Testament<sup>1</sup> and it is very distinct in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore a token of great ignorance and malice if the scholastics make a difference between the law for all and "evangelical counsels"<sup>3</sup> for the few. The Reformer calls it a foolish enterprise to make any difference between easy and difficult commandments. Considering our feebleness, even the smallest stroke of the Law is too difficult, but the Lord provides us with strength. If the Christian stands under the law of grace it does not mean that he roams about without Law, but that he is ingrafted in Christ whose grace frees the faithful from the curse of the Law and whose Spirit writes the Law in his heart. It is this grace which is called figuratively a law by Paul<sup>4</sup>, and in so doing he alludes to God's Law confronting it for comparison.<sup>5</sup>

In a previous paragraph we have stated the five differences which Calvin notices between the two administrations of the Covenant. Here we have to consider more closely his fourth point. Calvin starts from the prophecy about the New Covenant in Jer. 31,31-34 and then discusses the comparison of Old and New Covenants by Paul in 2 Cor. 3. It is obvious that these two texts cause some difficulty for Calvin's doctrine of the unity of the Covenants. He has to make several modifications on these passages in order to fit them into his train of thought:

- a) Paul does speak with strong words against the Law not because of the Law itself, but because he had to do with foolish advocates of the Law who by their striving for outward ceremonies obscured the meaning of the Gospel<sup>6</sup>. Only in the wrong contentions of the advers-

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1) Prov. 25,21; Ex. 23,45; Dt. 32,35; Lev. 19,18

2) Mt. 5,44-45

3) consilia evangelica

4) e.g. Rom. 8,2

5) II 8,55-57

6) II 11,7



terminology - into Calvin's usual exposition concerning the continuity of the Old Testament Law.

Following the exposition of Paul in 2 Cor. 3, Calvin summarizes five conclusions of the Apostle concerning the Law. The fourth point runs as follows: the Law has not eternal validity, but is temporal and transitory.<sup>1</sup> Calvin enumerates several reasons why the Law was to cease but the Gospel to remain in eternity, and then he makes the surprising statement: Under the abolishment of the Law I understand the abolishment of the whole Old Testament as far as it opposes the Gospel. Paul here does not only speak of the ceremonies, but he teaches how much mightier God's Spirit has revealed his might in the Gospel than formerly under the Law.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of the continuous function of the Decalogue conceived as the Law has mainly two sources, a theological and a logical one:

- 1) If there is only one Covenant, there is but one Law and God's will is perceived in the revelation of the Decalogue.
- 2) If God in the Decalogue has revealed the absolute and perfect pattern of justice we have the alternative: either to follow this perfect rule, or, if we dismiss it, to be without any just rule for our life.

If thus the Decalogue is made the decisive law for all Christians we are faced with the problem of appropriate interpretation. On the one hand we have to find some way of dealing with those parts which apply clearly to the Jews, on the other hand the commandments must be adapted somehow to the conceptions of the New Testament.

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implevit mortuam literam spiritu suo vivificans." CR 45,171;  
see further CR 50,46.

- 1) "Non perpetuae fuisse durationis, sed eius statum fuisse temporalem et caducum." CR 50,41.
- 2) "Ego abolitionem legis, cuius hic fit mentio, interpretor de toto veteri testamento, quatenus evangelio opponitur: ut cum illo conveniat: Lex et prophetae usque ad Johannem: nam id contextus postulat. Paulus enim non de solis caeremoniis hic disputat: sed docet quanto potentius vim suam exserat Dei spiritus in evangelio quam olim sub lege." CR 50,43.

Previous to his Decalogue interpretation in the Institutes the Reformer explains the method he is applying. In the first place he intends to follow the best interpreter of the Law, Christ. It is wrong to make Christ a second Moses who would have given the "evangelical law". Christ did not add anything new to the Mosaic law, he only restored it in its original purity, cleaning it from the lies and the leaven of the Pharisees.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Calvin wants us to realize that in the commands and prohibitions there is always contained more than is expressed by the words. This does not mean however that we may interpret the Scriptures in an arbitrary manner, but we have to examine carefully what is the clear purpose of the legislator. Certainly in almost every commandment there is expressed only a part signifying the whole<sup>2</sup>, so that it would be ridiculous to limit the meaning of the commandments to the narrowness of their words. How far we may go beyond the words will be known if we consider the reason or purpose why the respective commandment is given to us.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover from the command we have to infer the prohibition and vice versa, e.g. if God forbids that we should hate or violate our neighbour we can infer that he wants us to love him<sup>4</sup>. If God in the commandments or prohibitions mentions the most horrible transgressions (e.g. murder) he does so in order to call forth our extreme aversion towards all sins even if they appear to us less abominable (e.g. anger and hate) and in order to prevent us from self-deceit as to the gravity of our transgressions.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion we can summarize Calvin's method of interpretation as follows:

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1) II 8,7; cf. Göhler, op.cit. p. 113 ff.

2) manifestae sunt synekdochae; French edition 1560: Certes en tous les precepts il est si notoire qu'une partie est mise pour le tout.

3) II 8,8

4) II 8,8-9

5) II 8,10



- a) distinction between ceremonial and moral law
- b) allegorical explanation of passages applying to Israel<sup>1</sup>
- c) spiritual interpretation of the commandments (the law demands angelic purity)<sup>2</sup>
- d) inferences from the letter of the Law to the purpose of the law-giver (synekdoche).

A serious difficulty arises for Calvin where a saying of Jesus is in contradiction with an enactment of the Old Testament. The most conspicuous example is Mt. 5,33-37, "You are not to swear at all" over against Ex. 22,11 "an oath by the Lord shall be between them both." It is interesting to follow the Reformer's train of thought in his dealing with this problem: In the Old Testament God has not only permitted the oath but even ordered it for occasions of emergency. Christ stresses his unity with the Father; according to his words he teaches nothing except what is commissioned to him by the Father; he emphasizes that his teaching is not his own, but the teaching of God who has sent him. How then? Do we want God to contradict himself, assuming that he once had given a commandment and later prohibited and condemned what he had before demanded? Calvin "solves" the problem by declaring that Christ forbade only vain swearing, whereas the oath commanded by the Old Testament Law is unaffected. The Reformer blames the Anabaptists for clinging to the word "omnino" which according to him has to be connected not with swear, but with the following part of the sentence.<sup>3</sup>

This example is very instructive for Calvin's conception of the Old Testament Law<sup>4</sup>. As this Law is the perfect expression of God's will,

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1) for points a) and b) see p. 362 ff.

2) II 8,6

3) II 8,26. H.H. Wolf, op.cit. p. 138, calls this interpretation an example for Calvin's occasional "anfechtbare Harmonierungsversuche."

4) For further evidence of problematic interpretation see M. Simon, Die Beziehung zwischen Altem und Neuem Testament in der Schriftauslegung Calvins, in RK 1934,3-5. cf. Simon's conclusion: "Für ihn (= Calvin) gibt es kein Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Mensch, das nicht in einem Gesetz Gottes seinen Ausdruck fände." p. 26.

Jesus' sayings cannot possibly be in contradiction to it. They therefore have to be interpreted in such a manner that they agree with the Old Testament commandments.

#### 6. The natural law and the Decalogue.

In the question of natural law Calvin starts from Rom. 2,14-15. If the Apostle testifies that the pagans have the justice of the law engraved in their hearts we cannot say that they are completely blind in the matters of life<sup>1</sup>. They are able to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil<sup>2</sup>. But this knowledge is far from perfect, it consists only in some "seeds of justice": "Praeterea nec ex eo colligendum est, hominibus inesse plenam legis cognitionem, sed quaedam duntaxat iustitiae semina esse indita ipsorum ingenio."<sup>3</sup> Or, in the language of John: in the dark soul of man there is still shining a tiny spark.<sup>4</sup> The two parts of the light which are still residing in human nature are certain seeds of religion and the discrimination between good and evil.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin repudiates the scholastic view as if the natural law were sufficient for the right norm of life. The words of the Apostle manifest why man has this knowledge of the law: it is engraved in their hearts in order to make them inexcusable.<sup>6</sup> In the pagan it is conscience which takes the place of the law. Therefore the natural law may be defined as the knowledge of the conscience which distinguishes

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- 1) "Si Gentes naturaliter Legis iustitiam habent mentibus suis insculptam, certe non dicemus eas in vitae ratione prorsus caecutire." II 2,22.
  - 2) See the interpretation of Rom. 2,15: "Hoc est, testificantur esse inscriptum cordibus suis discrimen et iudicium. quo inter aequum et iniquum, honestum et turpe distinguant." CR 49,38.
  - 3) CR 49,38
  - 4) "Quia in obscura humanae mentis caligine adhuc quaedam fulgoris scintillae emicant." CR 47,6.
  - 5) "Nam omnibus ingenitum est aliquod religionis semen: deinde insculptum est eorum conscientiis boni et mali discrimen." CR 47,6.
  - 6) "Finis ergo legis naturalis est, ut reddatur homo inexcusabilis." II 2,22; cf. CR 24,725: "Naturaliter quidem insculpta est boni et mali notitia hominibus, quo reddantur inexcusabiles."

sufficiently between just and unjust. It has thus the task of counter-acting man's pretence of ignorance.<sup>1</sup>

If this natural knowledge suffices to convince man of his guilt so that he now begins to fear God's tribunal, yet we cannot infer that man's judgment is always sane and faultless. If we examine our reason in the light of God's Law, which is the unique pattern of perfect justice, we conceive in how many parts it is blind. At any rate it does not know at all the principal parts of the first table. Though unpius people testify that they conceive something of the spiritual worship of God, none the less they pervert it presently by their fictions.

As to the commandments of the second table man understands a little more, as far as the precepts are related to the preservation of human society. But even here there appears at times a great lack of insight. Among other things, covetousness is not considered a sin by natural man. "Ante suffocatur naturae lumen quam ad primum huius abyssi ingressum accedat."<sup>2</sup>

From these statements it appears that Calvin is less optimistic than Luther as to man's natural faculties. In the introduction to his Decalogue interpretation Calvin deals again with the present subject. What we have to learn from the two tables is somehow taught by the inward law which is written and as it were engraved in the hearts of all men. But man is covered by such a darkness or error that he, by this natural law, is hardly able to taste what is the acceptable worship of God and is certainly far from the right knowledge of it. Moreover he is puffed up with arrogance and pride and dazzled by his egotism to such an extent that he is not able to look properly at himself, to descend into himself in order to learn how to humble himself and

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1) II 2,22. On the whole cf. T.F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, London 1949, p. 154 ff.

2) II 2,24

to confess his misery. Because of this dullness and obstinacy of natural man God has given the written Law.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin's own words manifest clearly enough that he attributes to the natural law hardly any positive effect concerning our knowledge of God and his will for the forming of our lives.<sup>2</sup> God revealed the Law in order to give a more certain testimony about that which was too obscure in the natural law.<sup>3</sup> Therefore Calvin in his interpretation of the Decalogue does not refer to the natural law. It is thus not necessary for our purpose to enter into discussion concerning Calvin's teaching on the natural law in general.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion we may say that Luther sees in the Decalogue (after some modifications) the summary of God's Law because it agrees with natural law. Calvin however considers the Decalogue the essence of the moral law, forming part of the Covenant, which reveals what the natural law fails to teach us.

#### 7. About the life of the Christian.

This is the title of Book III, chapter 6, of Calvin's Institutes.<sup>5</sup> If we remember Calvin's statement that the Decalogue is the absolute and perfect pattern of justice for the Christian we should expect a further dealing with the Ten Commandments in the present chapter. But strangely enough we hardly have any references to the Decalogue. The relation to the Old Testament code is established: the law is said to contain that renewal, in which God's image is restored in us. But as

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1) II 8,1

2) see in addition II 2,18

3) II 8,1

4) see e.g. Bohatec J., Calvin und das Recht, Feudingen 1934,  
Niesel W., Die Theologie Calvins, München 1957, p. 97 ff,  
refutation of Bohatec's view  
Brunner E., Natur und Gnade, Tübingen 1934,  
Barth Peter, Das Problem der natürlichen Theologie bei  
Calvin, München 1935, refutation of Brunner's  
view.

5) De vita Christiani: ac primum quibus argumentis ad eam nos  
hortetur Scriptura.

in our laziness we need much incitement and help, the Reformer considers it useful to establish from various Bible passages the right way in which we shall order our life.<sup>1</sup>

The instruction given to us by the Scriptures consists mainly in the two following points:

- 1) the love of justice is put in our hearts
- 2) a norm is prescribed for us which keeps us from going astray in our striving for justice.<sup>2</sup>

But the basic thought for this whole chapter appears in the following paragraph: God, our Father, who in his Christ has reconciled himself with us, has in him designated the image into which we are to be shaped according to his will. Christ is put before our eyes as the example whose form we have to express in our life. "What could one ask for which would be more efficacious than this? Yea, what would you seek besides this one?"

A further motive for the biblical exhortation are God's benefits: He has shown himself as our Father, it would therefore be unthankful not to behave as his children. Christ has cleansed us with his blood and has imparted this ablution to us in our baptism, therefore we may not defile ourselves again. As he, our Head, has ascended to heaven, let us strive for heaven. The Holy Spirit has consecrated our bodies as God's temples, therefore we cannot allow ourselves to be profaned by sin. "These are indeed good foundations for the right ordering of our life."<sup>3</sup>

With these considerations Calvin has prepared the ground for the two following chapters:

- The sum of the Christian life, where we have to speak of self-denial<sup>4</sup>,
- About the carrying of the Cross which is part of the self-denial<sup>5</sup>.

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1) III 6,1  
3) III 6,3  
5) III 8

2) III 6,2  
4) III 7

In the introductory sentence of chapter 7 Calvin once more refers to the Decalogue: Though the law of the Lord contains an excellent instruction for the shaping of our life, nevertheless it pleased our heavenly Master to train his people by a more accurate method to the rule which was prescribed in the Law.<sup>1</sup>

The main principle of this "more accurate method" is the following: it is the office of the faithful "to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is the reasonable worship."<sup>2</sup> Then Calvin in 21 paragraphs develops this life of offering in the imitation of Christ under the heading "self-denial", quoting many passages of the Gospel and the Epistles, but never referring to the Decalogue. An analysis of these two chapters lies outside our scope, but this short survey may suffice for the following consideration:

In the Catechism of Geneva, after the introduction on the knowledge of God, we have found four points which are developed successively:

Faith - obedience - prayer - sacraments.<sup>3</sup>

In the Institutes we discover in principle the same order, though many other subjects are inserted.

Books I and II deal with the knowledge of God as creator and redeemer. Book III includes the subjects of faith, christian life (= obedience) and prayer.

Book IV is concerned with the Sacraments.

In the Catechism as well as in the Institutes, Christian life as service in obedience ensues from faith and is thus treated after the

1) "Etsi optimam et aptissime dispositam constituendae vitae methodum habet lex Domini, visum tamen est caelesti magistro, accuratiore etiamnum ratione ad ipsam quam in Lege praescripserat regulam suos formare." III 7,1

2) Rom. 12,1

3) see p. 354



explanation of the principles of faith, because according to the Reformer only he who is justified by faith is able to do good works. There is therefore uniformity in the arrangement, but a striking difference in the approach.

In the Institutes Christ is put before us as the supreme norm in whose image we are to be shaped. Unity with Christ and imitation of his example are the guiding thoughts in Calvin's exposition. In the Catechism however the service of God is limited to the observance of the Decalogue and Christ does not appear as basis and norm of Christian life. In the Institutes Calvin had of course dealt with the Decalogue in an earlier context: the knowledge of God the Redeemer. But when he speaks about Christian life he makes only a formal allusion to the Ten Commandments and for the rest keeps to the New Testament.

This is certainly a remarkable difference between the two works and raises several questions: If Calvin in his Institutes has two rules for service in obedience (Decalogue and Christ), and if he at the specific place where he deals with Christian life, starts from and aims at Christ, why then in his Catechism does he expose the Decalogue as the only rule? Is he influenced so much by the other catechisms (Luther, Bucer) so as to limit himself to the Decalogue? Or does he, where he has to confine himself to the principal subjects of instruction, drop the christological foundation and development of his ethics in favour of the Old Testament Code?

In any case, his Institutes would suggest another pattern of catechetical instruction than the one we find in the Catechism of Geneva.

## § 18. The Heidelberg and the Westminster Catechisms.

### 1. The Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>1</sup>

In order to put an end to the controversies between different theological factions (Lutherans, Philippists and Swiss) the Kurfürst Friedrich III of the Pfalz ordered the composition of a catechism which at the same time could be used as confession of the Church of Kurpfalz. The preliminary theological work was done by Ursinus, and after discussion with the Faculty of Theology, the Church Council and the Kurfürst himself<sup>2</sup>, the catechism was given its final shape, probably by Olevian. Subsequently the Heidelberg Catechism was inserted into the Church Order of the Kurpfalz of 1563.

Many catechisms had been composed in the preceding decades, and there is evidence that Ursinus made wide use of this rich catechetical literature.<sup>3</sup> It seems that Calvin's Institutes and his Catechism of 1541 is predominant in the theology of the Heidelberg Catechism<sup>4</sup>,

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1) Quotations of the text from "Bekenntnisschriften und Kirchenordnungen der nach Gottes Wort reformierten Kirche", ed. W. Niesel, Zollikon-Zürich 1938, and Th.F. Torrance, The School of Faith, London 1959.

For a good summary of the background see K. Barth, Die christliche Lehre nach dem Heidelberger Katechismus, Zollikon-Zürich 1948, p. 16 ff., for a recapitulation of the content: K. Barth, Einführung in den Heidelberger Katechismus, ThSt 63, Zürich 1960.

2) "... mit rhat und zuthun Unssrer gantzen Theologischen Facultet allhie, auch allen Superintendenten und fürnemsten Kirchendienern.." Niesel, Bekenntnisschriften... p. 139.

3) see M.A. Gooszen, De Heidelbergsche Catechismus, Leiden 1890  
A. Lang, Der Heidelberger Katechismus und vier verwandte Katechismen, Leipzig 1907,  
H. Graffmann, Unterricht im Heidelberger Katechismus III p. 597 ff.  
RE<sup>3</sup> p. 164 ff.

4) so Lange and Graffmann, against Gooszen, who suggests that there is a stronger dependence on Bullinger.

though there are influences from Strassburg (Capito, Butzer, Zell), Zürich (Judä, Bullinger), East-Friesland and London (Joh. a Lasco, Micronius) and from Melanchthon.

The catechism, which is divided into 52 lessons or "Sundays", opens with the well-known question: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" and the answer points to the fact "that I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ", explaining in a few sentences to what extent this "belonging to Christ" relates to my comfort in life and in death. The second question and answer provide the plan for the catechism: "How many things do you need to know, that you may live and die in this comfort and blessing?"

Three things:

First, how great is my sin and misery.

Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery.

Third, how I am to be grateful to God for such redemption.

The first part (The misery of man) is the shortest one, covering only three Sundays. Our misery is recognized in the Law of God, as summarized in the double commandment of love. Because of our sin and corruption we are not able to keep God's Law, therefore we are under God's curse, awaiting eternal punishment.

The second part (The redemption of man, 27 Sundays) opens with the question how it might be possible to be saved from our state of condemnation. No creature can redeem us, only a mediator and redeemer who is true man and true God would be able to bring us salvation.

"But who is that Mediator, who is at the same time true God and a true, righteous Man? (Qu. 18).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness."

The redemption is wrought by Christ and can be received only by true faith. What we need to believe is summarized in the three articles

of faith (Qu. 22). After the explanation of the Creed we hear that this faith is wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the use of the holy Sacraments (Qu. 65). The discussion of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is followed by a lesson on the "Office of the Keys" (Church discipline) which concludes the second part.

The third part (Thankfulness, 21 Sundays) deals with man's response, i.e. his good works as tokens of his thankfulness. True repentance and conversion consist in two points: in the mortification of the old man (hating sin and turning from it) and the resurrection of the new man (heartfelt joy in God through Christ, and a passionate love to live according to the will of God in all good works.)

Qu. 91: But what works are good?

Answer: Those only which are done from true faith, according to the law of God, for His glory, and not those based on our own opinion or the commandments of men.

Qu. 92: What is the law of God?

As answer is given the text of the Decalogue according to Ex. 20. Then follows the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. For each commandment is reserved a Sunday, only the Third Commandment covers two Sundays because special attention is given to the question of the oath.

Prayer is necessary because it is the principal element in thankfulness (das fürnembste stück der danckbarkeyt, qu. 116). This statement introduces the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer which concludes the catechism proper.

It shows that the design in its main features has a considerable affinity to the Catechism of Geneva, but our catechism does not discuss the sacraments at the end as Calvin does. They are connected with the Creed in the second part. This change may have been caused in the first place by the headings of the different parts. The Sacraments could hardly be dealt with in connexion with man's thank-

fulness. But we may surmise other and more stringent reasons for this peculiar arrangement. Faith and sacraments are related strongly to the work of the Holy Spirit (Qu. 65). It is God's Spirit who teaches in the Gospel and confirms by the sacraments that our salvation is established by Christ's offering on the Cross. (Qu. 67). Secondly, baptism is recognized as presupposition for the new life as members of Christ,<sup>1</sup> and therefore it is only natural if the sacraments are treated before the Law.

The most spectacular difference, however, lies in the first part. Calvin starts with the knowledge of God, whereas the Heidelberg catechism first deals with man's misery which is recognized from God's Law. Here we have undoubtedly Lutheran influence.<sup>2</sup> The Law, represented by the Double Commandment of Love, is introduced in its special function of 'usus elenchticus' in order to reveal man's sin. Concerning the treatment of the Law the Heidelberg catechism is a compromise between Luther and Calvin. Luther considers as the main function of the Law its sin-revealing office, therefore the Decalogue is dealt with in the first part of his catechism. Calvin, on the other hand, denotes the teaching function as its main use and consequently, in his second catechism, explains the Law when he speaks about the Christian life, interpreting first the Decalogue and then the Double Commandment of Love. As the Heidelberg catechism wants to stress both functions of the Law, but cannot quote twice the Decalogue, it separates

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- 1) see Qu. 70: "What does it mean to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ? It means to have the forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He has shed for us in His sacrifice on the Cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be a member of Christ, so that we may more and more die unto sin, and lead a life blessed by God and without blame."
  - 2) see Graffmann, op.cit. p. 656: "Problematischer dagegen ist der 1. Teil 'Von des Menschen Elend' mit seiner Vorordnung des Gesetzes (hier des Doppelgebotes der Liebe) vor das Evangelium im Sinne des usus elenchticus, bei der offenbar Luthers 'Kurtze Form' und Melanchthons Gesetzesverständnis Pate gestanden haben."

the Double Commandment of Love from the Ten Commandments. The former is put at the beginning and assigned the *usus elenchticus*, whereas the latter appears in the third part of the catechism, fulfilling the function of the '*usus didacticus*'.

It is however a striking fact that in the conclusion at the end of the Decalogue interpretation (Qu. 114-115) it is again the *usus elenchticus* of the Law which is stressed:

Qu. 115: "Why, then, does God have the ten commandments proclaimed to us so strictly if no one can keep them in this life?

First, that all our life long we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so more eagerly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; secondly, that we may continually apply ourselves and ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may more and more be renewed in the image of God, until we attain the goal of full perfection after this life."

This definition shows a great similarity to Calvin's conclusion in the Catechism of Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

When we read the interpretation of the Decalogue in the Heidelberg catechism it is as if we were put under God's absolute demand as revealed in the Old Testament and as radicalized in the New, with the only result that we recognize our sinful character. It is often mentioned with praise that ethics in the present catechism are developed under the heading of thankfulness. This kind of approach is however not free from ambiguity. Can we be satisfied with a thankfulness which consists in a fruitless endeavour to do God's will and results merely in the knowledge that we are never able to keep God's Law and are thus never living according to His will?<sup>2</sup>

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1) Qu. 227-228; see above p. 362.

2) cf. Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 310: "Da haben wir die Idee der alten Kirche wieder: die freiwillig hervorquellende Glaubensfrucht. Aber



In the New Testament, the Christian life is not mainly characterized by the term 'thankfulness'; as a matter of fact this word suggests somehow man's autonomy: God has done something for us, and now it is our turn to do something for Him, i.e. to thank Him by trying to live according to His Law. For Paul the new life is not the answer of autonomous man, but the fruit of Christ's work for us and in us. Good works are the fruit of the Spirit, not the outcome of man's endeavour, even if he be spurred on by thankfulness.

It is surprising indeed that the Heidelberg Catechism, though in its first and second part putting Christ into the centre, nevertheless in its third part confronts man with the Law apart from Christ and represents him more or less according to the picture of man given in Rom. 7,7 ff.<sup>1</sup> The only ray in this dark picture is the possibility of prayer and the hope that somehow the Spirit will work what man is unable to do. But how this might happen does not come into the purview.

andererseits kann doch ein grellerer Contrast zwischen der Idee und dem Mittel ihres Ausdruckes kaum erfunden werden, als der darin vorliegt, dass der Dekalog mit seinem zehnfachen "Du sollst" das Princip der aus dem Glauben fliessenden Dankbarkeit vertreten soll. Darin fühlte wieder die alte Kirche viel schärfer, viel Paulinischer, möchte man sagen." cf. op.cit. p. 312.  
see also RE<sup>3</sup> 10 p. 173.18f: "Im dritten Teil ist der Gesichtspunkt der Dankbarkeit oft schwer festzuhalten." With this judgment, Lauterburg puts the matter rather mildly.

- 1) cf. Lang, op.cit. p. CI: "Der Katechismus macht Versuche zu christozentrischer Gestaltung; dabei aber wird die Summa des Gesetzes ohne Rücksicht auf das ethische Vorbild Christi, die guten Werke als notwendige Früchte der Bekehrung ohne Beziehung auf die Nachfolge Christi beschrieben."

Lang is of the opinion that this fact is due to the 'character of compromise' of this catechism. But it does not seem that any catechism of the preceding time would have suggested a better christological approach in ethics. Calvin's Institutes point in that direction (see § 17.7) but his Catechism of Geneva does not deal with this subject in the sense of the New Testament exhortations. We can at best suppose that the separation of the Double

In Paul's epistles the life of the Christian is based on the new reality created by Christ. In Christ he is a new creature and by his union with Christ - through faith and baptism - he becomes an imitator of the Lord and loves as Christ has loved him, thus fulfilling the Law. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, the new life is an ideal put before man but never to be attained, as the Law will never be fulfilled.

In this connexion it is interesting to consider the answer to Qu.18: "Who is that Mediator, who is at the same time true God and true, righteous Man?"

Answer: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness."

This answer consists in the quotation of 1 Cor. 1,30 but it should be kept in mind that only half of the verse is quoted. It is certainly correct that the statement "Christ our righteousness and redemption" be put at the beginning of the article of justification. It is however fatal that the second part of this verse, i.e. "Christ is made our wisdom and sanctification", is not made the basis of the chapter on sanctification. This would guard us against making the Old Testament Law our wisdom and considering sanctification an aim to strive for but never to attain, instead of pointing to the Spirit who guides us, and to Christ, in whom is the foundation and the possibility of the new life acceptable by God.

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Commandment of Love from the third part of the Heidelberg Catechism made it more difficult for the authors to see the relation between God's love which appeared in Christ and our love as fruit of God's deed.

## 2. The Westminster Catechisms.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Larger and the Shorter Westminster Catechisms were drafted by a special commission appointed by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and approved by the Assembly in 1648. This Assembly of Divines, which met on the 12th July 1643, had been "summoned by the two Houses of Parliament to advise as to a further and more perfect reformation in the Liturgy, Discipline, and Government of the Church of England... They were required to prepare creeds and directories, not for the Church of England only, but for the Churches of Christ in the three kingdoms, so as to bring them into the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, church government and public worship, and catechising."<sup>2</sup> Previous to the approval of these two catechisms the Assembly had worked out and accepted the 'Confession of Faith', and it appears, that the catechisms in their theological outlook as well as in the wording are closely related to the 'Confession'.<sup>3</sup> It might be called a unique phenomenon that "the documents which are to-day the authoritative standards for the English-speaking Presbyterian Churches of the world were prepared by an Assembly of English Divines, men who were episcopally ordained clergymen of the Church of England."<sup>4</sup>

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1) Quotations of the text from "Confession of Faith etc.", ed.

W. Blackwood & Sons, Ltd. Edinburgh and London 1959.

For the story of the Catechisms see

Alexander F. Mitchell, Catechisms of the Second Reformation,  
London 1886,

William Carruthers, The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster  
Assembly of Divines, London 1897,

S.W. Carruthers, Three centuries of the Westminster Shorter  
Catechism, Edinburgh, 1957.

For a theological evaluation:

Thomas F. Torrance, The School of Faith, London 1959.

2) W. Carruthers, op.cit. p. 27

3) "The Confession of Faith is the stem of which grew two branches,  
the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms." S.W.Carruthers, op.cit. p.6.

4) W. Carruthers, op.cit. p.27.

We shall not investigate here the various sources of the Westminster Catechisms. It goes without saying that they are based to a great extent on the Catechisms of the Reformation and influenced by the development of the century which had elapsed since then.<sup>1</sup> As there is no basic difference between the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms we confine our investigation to the latter, but shall refer to the point in which in its arrangement it departs from the former.

The Shorter Catechism opens with the inquiry as regards the chief end of man and having pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of our knowledge "concerning God, and what duty God requires of man" (Qu.2-3) it gives in its first part (Qu. 4-38) a summary of the doctrine of God, Creation, Providence, Sin, the Redeemer, the Spirit, our Calling, Justification, Adoption and Sanctification, closing with the enumeration of the benefits which accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification (Qu. 36-38). We quote the answer to Qu.36, which is particularly relevant to our purpose:

"The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end."

It is interesting to note that the Westminster Catechisms do not base this first part on the Creed, as is the custom with the other catechisms. This results in a more scholastic treatment of the matter<sup>2</sup> and, proportionally, a short treatment of Christ's person and work.

- 1) see the characterizing of the Shorter Catechism by A.F. Mitchell, op.cit. p. xxviii: "It is a thoroughly Calvinistic and Puritan catechism, the ripest fruit of the Assembly's thought and experience, maturing and finally fixing the definitions of theological terms to which Puritanism for half a century had been leading up and gradually coming closer and closer in its legion of catechisms."
- 2) cf. T.F. Torrance, School of Faith, p. xviii: The Reformation catechisms "expound Christian doctrine in the light of its own

Question 39: "What is the duty which God requireth of man?" opens the second part (Qu. 39-81) of the Catechism. This part is thus dominated by the term "man's duty", which consists in man's obedience to God's revealed will. This will is made known in the moral law which is summarized in the Ten Commandments, and the sum of the Ten Commandments is the Double Commandment of Love (Qu. 39-42). The interpretation of the Decalogue is very brief; the commandment of Sabbath observance, covering 6 questions, seems to have been of special concern. (The explanation of the Decalogue in the Larger Catechism, on the other hand, is quite extensive and a worthy counterpart to the medieval mirrors of auricular confession!).<sup>1</sup>

The third part of the catechism (Qu. 82-107) opens with the statement that "no mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed" (Qu. 82). As these transgressions deserve God's wrath and curse there rises the question how we can escape this fate, and we are pointed to a further requirement of God, i.e. "faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption." (Qu. 85). These outward means are Christ's "ordinances, especially the word, sacraments and prayer." (Qu. 88). Hence this question provides the plan for the rest of the catechism, i.e. on the Word (reading and preaching, Qu. 89-90), the Sacraments (Qu. 91-97) and Prayer (Qu. 98-107).

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inherent patterns, following the direction of the Apostles' Creed, whereas the Westminster divines abandoned that for a schematism of their own which they imposed upon the instruction they had received from their fathers. They schematised it to the scholastic pattern of the Federal Theology and thus expounded Christian doctrine from the point of view of a particular school of thought."

- 1) It is a striking fact, though in agreement with the whole outlook of this part, that most scriptural references are related to the Old Testament.

From this short survey it is evident that the Westminster Catechisms, if compared with their predecessors, are still farther removed from a christological basis in ethics. In the interpretation of the Ten Commandments, the few references to the New Testament or to Christ we were able to discover in the Catechism of Geneva are dropped in the text of the Shorter Catechism, and the attempt by the Heidelberg Catechism to put its ethical part under the conception of thankfulness is not followed by the divines of the Westminster Assembly.

It is indeed strange that the significant definition of 'sanctification' (Qu.35)<sup>1</sup> seems to be forgotten completely as soon as the ethical part is opened. From Question 39 on, Christ has disappeared, man is standing at Mount Sinai and bluntly told his duty on the basis of the Decalogue as if nothing had been said before about his calling, justification, adoption and sanctification in Christ. The Saviour comes in again after we are told that we daily break God's commandments and therefore deserve God's wrath and curse. Faith and repentance, though described as "saving grace" (Qu. 86-87), as a matter of fact appear as further paragraphs in the chapter concerning man's duty.

It is here that we have to point out a difference between the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms. In the former, justifying faith is dealt with immediately after the article on justification (Qu. 71-72), and repentance is brought into close connection with sanctification (Qu. 75-76). But in the Shorter Catechism, justifying faith and repentance are moved away from their legitimate place and connected with man's duty, following the interpretation of the Decalogue.

S.W. Carruthers considers this a more logical position<sup>2</sup>, but if we

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1) see above p. 400

2) "Faith and Repentance have their more logical position in the second division of the Shorter Catechism, which deals with the



take as criterion the New Testament instead of our logic, we have doubtless to admit that even within the time the divines of the Westminster Assembly were shaping their catechisms, they accomplished a step which took them still farther away from the ethical approach as found in the New Testament.

If it is said that in the Westminster Catechism as a whole man stands in the centre<sup>1</sup>, this applies even more to the ethical part. Nothing is left of the Christological approach which is so significant in Paul's epistles. So this catechism reveals to us what are the ultimate consequences if it is not understood that Christ has taken the place of the Torah: man is put under the Law in an even more exclusive sense than was the case in the times of the Old Testament.

duty required of man, instead of being placed beside Justification, Adoption and Sanctification as in the first division of the Larger Catechism, which deals with what man is to believe concerning God." S.W. Carruthers, op.cit. p. 5.

- 1) "Ultimately the main content of these Catechisms is concerned with man's action, man's obedience, man's duty toward God, man's duty to his neighbour, and man's religion, although undoubtedly all that is directed upward in a most astonishing way to the glory of God." T.F. Torrance, op.cit. p. xviii.

Chapter 4: Is the Decalogue an adequate basis for the  
ethical teaching of the Church?

§ 19. Problems arising from the use of the Decalogue in catechetical  
teaching.

1. The aim of the present study.

In our investigation up to now we have directed our attention mainly to the role the Decalogue played in history, especially in the catechetical teaching of the Church. As this Code was not used in the "catechism" of the New Testament, and as Paul in all his epistles never referred to the Ten Commandments as the basis for his exhortations we had to enquire about the theological reasons for this striking fact. The subtitle of the present thesis, however, shows that our main concern is not with the exegetical or historical side of the issue, but with an examination of the question whether the Decalogue is an adequate basis for the ethical teaching of the Church. As it is impossible to answer or even to discuss this issue apart from the Old and New Testaments and the development in Church history it was necessary to undertake the foregoing investigation, and it will show that the conclusions we draw are in close connection with the results we have attained so far.

As a matter of fact the question of our subtitle is generally answered with an unreserved "yes", and many people even feel irritated when this question is raised, suspecting some heresy behind it. The Decalogue is rooted firmly in our catechisms and is taught to the children in Church as well as in school as the summary of God's Law and embodiment of His will<sup>1</sup>; hence the possibility of knowing God's will for

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1) "It is almost true to say that the religion of Victorian England was more firmly rooted in the (Ten) Commandments than it was in the New Testament." J. Drewett, The Ten Commandments in the 20th Century, SPCK 1941, p.9.

the shaping of our life from a source other than the Decalogue seems almost out of the question.

The great catechisms which appeared in the 16th century and later (e.g. Luther's Small and Great Catechisms, Calvin's catechisms of 1537 and 1541, the Catechismus Romanus, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Westminster Catechism, the Anglican Catechism) develop ethical instruction from the Decalogue. There have of course been attempts to set this Code aside and to use another approach to moral teaching<sup>1</sup>, but wherever the tradition of the Reformation is maintained, the Decalogue remains one of the main parts of the Catechism.<sup>2</sup> There may be a few exceptions in which the Ten Commandments are given a less central position or appear in a different wording so as to meet the needs of the teacher; but this pertains only to manuals with very limited circulation. Particularly in the Reformed Churches there seems to be general discontent with the traditional catechisms.<sup>3</sup> But whether

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- 1) This applies to the catechism compiled by the followers of Schwenckfeldt in the 16th century (see Zezschwitz, System... p. 319) and to the protest of the Grundtvigians in Denmark against the use of the Decalogue in the last century (Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 178). Under the influence of the Enlightenment there have been tried other methods of ethical teaching ( see RE<sup>3</sup> 10 p. 143 f.) and there are still a few catechisms in use, drafted by so-called liberal theologians, which do not use the Ten Commandments as basis.
  - 2) See Joh. Mich. Reu, D. Martin Luthers Kleiner Katechismus, Die Geschichte seiner Entstehung, seiner Verbreitung und seines Gebrauchs, München 1929, p. 207: "Seit 1850 war es in allen lutherischen Landeskirchen wieder selbstverständlich geworden, dass Luthers Katechismus die Grundlage des religiösen Jugendunterrichts zu sein hat." cf. RE<sup>3</sup> 10 p. 144.26 ff.
  - 3) In the Church of the Canton Bern (Switzerland) for instance, 26 different catechisms are in use, (see Kirchenblatt für die Reformierte Schweiz, June 1961) and in other Swiss Churches the situation is similar. In the Church of Scotland an endeavour has been made to draft a manual for catechetical instruction, the language of which is more simple and less "theological" than that of the Shorter Catechism. But the "Revised Catechism" submitted to the General Assembly of 1959 shows that there is no departure from the main parts of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

this discontent results in a revision either of the formulation or the arrangement of the subject matter of the older catechisms, or in the detachment from any tradition in order to follow one's own method of teaching, the question of the adequacy of the Decalogue for this teaching has not formed so far the subject of theological discussion.

It is our conviction, however, that this discussion must be taken up, especially for the following reasons: If the Decalogue legitimately occupies its important position in catechetical teaching, then no Church or individual teacher has the right to do away with this Code and choose another way for his catechetical-ethical instruction. If, on the other hand, the traditional use of the Decalogue is questioned or even actually rejected, this may be done only on strong theological grounds and in discussion with the Reformers who have given the Ten Commandments their prominent place in our Churches. Supposing there are strong theological reasons for another approach in catechetical-ethical teaching, then we would not of course be justified in maintaining the use of the Decalogue only for the sake of tradition, unless we are to be unfaithful to one of the basic maxims of the Reformation, i.e. to put Holy Scripture above tradition and to be '*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*'.

In this connexion we venture the suggestion that a great deal of our discontentment with the traditional catechisms mentioned above may be caused unconsciously by the problems which arise from the attempt to develop Christian ethics from the Decalogue. Whether this is really a hidden reason for the embarrassment of many a catechist will only be revealed in an objective theological discussion which must neither be determined by methodological considerations nor influenced too much by our regard for cherished traditions.

If it is said that the question of the adequacy of the Decalogue for catechetical instruction has not so far formed the subject of theological discussion this does not mean that there is an absolute lack

of criticism concerning our practice. But this challenge from different quarters has never - as far as we can discern - been taken seriously and has therefore been unable to influence the traditional treatment of ethics in catechetical instruction.

An important - if indirect - questioning of our practice is raised by the compendiums of Christian ethics, whether they be written for students and ministers or for lay people. These books usually do not proceed from the Decalogue but, as far as they are based on the New Testament, develop ethics essentially from Christology. This applies even to Calvin's Institutes and led us to the question why this Reformer did not take the same Christological basis when he treated the Christian life in his catechism.<sup>1</sup>

A. de Quervain in his compendium of ethics<sup>2</sup> explicitly declares that he intends to bridge this gap between the text-books of ethics and catechetical teaching.<sup>3</sup> He blames the compendiums of ethics of the past decades for having tried to emancipate the Church from the Decalogue.<sup>4</sup> But as a matter of fact he takes another starting point himself, and wants to free the Decalogue from its traditional isolation in popular ethics.<sup>5</sup> In the first two hundred pages, de Quervain deals

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1) see § 17.7

2) A. de Quervain, *Die Heiligung*, Zollikon-Zürich 1942.

3) "Der künftige Diener am Wort hat Mühe, den Zusammenhang zu finden zwischen dem, was er in den Lehrbüchern liest, und der Auslegung der Zehn Gebote im kirchlichen Unterricht. Dieses Buch will eine Hilfe dem sein, der im Nachdenken über ethische Fragen oder richtiger, über unsere Heiligung, über das Tun des Willens Gottes, zur christlichen Zucht zurückzukehren, aus der Zuchtlosigkeit unseres Denkens und Redens heraus will." A. de Quervain, *op.cit.* p.5

4) A. de Quervain, *op.cit.* p. 249

5) "Die Lehre von der Heiligung löst aber den Dekalog aus dieser Isolierung, in der die populäre Ethik des Konfirmandenunterrichtes und der apologetischen Predigten und Vorträge die Gebote bringt. Sie zerstört die Illusion, als würde im Dekalog zu allen Lebensfragen Stellung genommen..." *op.cit.* p. 249.

first with the "sanctification in Jesus Christ" and then with the "life of the Christian in the sign of the Cross and resurrection." The interpretation of eight commandments of the Decalogue appears only in the last part of the book.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless de Quervain contends that God's Law is summarized in the Ten Commandments, pointing to Mt. 19,17. "Wir haben das Aergernis zu tragen, das darin liegt, dass es ein geschriebenes und nicht ein selbsterzeugtes Gesetz ist."<sup>2</sup>

Beside this indirect questioning of our catechetical practice by the compendiums of ethics there are voices which reveal more directly their doubts about the use made of the Decalogue. They come from quite different quarters and consider the problem from various standpoints.<sup>3</sup> In these contributions we can distinguish criticisms on exegetical, Christological and methodological grounds. In order to avoid a theoretical approach we shall consider first several problems which arise from the use made of the Decalogue in our catechetical teaching and only after taking into account all the implications, will some conclusions concerning the Ten Commandments in our instruction be drawn.

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1) A. de Quervain, op.cit. p. 305-468. The second and tenth commandments are omitted.

2) op.cit. p. 27.

3) see e.g.

E. Chr. Achelis, Der Dekalog als katechetisches Lehrstück, Giessen 1905, esp. p. 30 and 71 f.

Charles Gore, Dominant Ideas and Corrective Principles, 1918, Ch. IV: The Ten Commandments in the Christian Church, p. 118-133.

Joh. Meinhold, Der Dekalog, Giessen 1927

D. Hennig, Der kleine Katechismus ein Missionsbuch? NAM 1928, p. 173 ff, 214 ff, 244 ff.

Paul Bläser, Das Gesetz bei Paulus, Münster i.W. 1941, esp. p. 227 ff.

Emil Brunner, Die christliche Lehre von Schöpfung und Erlösung, Dogmatik Bd. 2, Zürich 1950 p. 257 f.

W. Schöllgen, Art. 'Dekalog' in Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche III, 1959



## 2. The exegetical issue.

Any attentive reader of the Old Testament will observe that the Ten Commandments were not understood by the Israelites in the same sense as they are interpreted in the Church. This applies to almost every commandment<sup>1</sup>, and even a superficial glance at the history of Decalogue interpretation shows that in the Ten Commandments God does obviously not speak as unequivocally as we make it to appear. It seems that very often God is said to have commanded at Mount Sinai exactly what a Church according to her tradition and interpretation wants him to command.<sup>2</sup> The prohibition of the making of images is very instructive in that respect. Even in the Churches of the Reformation the Second Commandment has been given quite opposite interpretations and consequently different treatments. Luther in his catechism has dropped this precept altogether, whereas in the Reformed catechisms it is of considerable significance.

The commandment on Sabbath observance has been interpreted in all sorts of ways. For the early Fathers and to a great extent for the Reformers it had only a typological significance for the Christians.<sup>3</sup> The Apostolic Constitutions<sup>4</sup> and other writings of the fourth century wanted the Sabbath to be observed besides Sunday<sup>5</sup>, the Seventh Day Adventists consider the replacement of the seventh by the first day of the week as the great Fall of the Church, but mostly the Jewish conception of the Sabbath is transferred somehow to the Christian Sunday. Occasionally the word Sabbath is replaced by Sunday (the Lord's Day) or vice versa.<sup>6</sup>

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1) see § 4.

2) see e.g. C.H. Moehlman, The Story of the Ten Commandments, New York

3) For Calvin see p. 363 ff. 1928

4) Book VII ch. 23

5) It seems that in recent time T.F. Torrance is thinking along similar lines. See his mimeographed typescript 'The Lord's Day' (1961):

"If we follow the line taken by the Earliest Church then Saturday...  
(see p. 410)

6) cf. Qu.59 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "... and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian sabbath."

The Sixth and Seventh Commandments are not usually interpreted without allusion to the Sermon on the Mount. But what conclusions may we draw from the Sixth Commandment with respect to war? What are its implications for the 'just' war, the 'holy' war, or for capital punishment? Can it be used for the vindication of pacifism or even vegetarianism?

The Seventh Commandment does not prohibit polygamy and several other practices<sup>1</sup> which are out of the question from a Christian point of view. Whenever missionaries in Africa and elsewhere tried to forbid polygamy on the basis of the Decalogue they got themselves into peculiar situations, as the Old Testament actually seemed to prove the contrary of what they wanted to demonstrate. In the countries where polygamy is practised, this custom is not only a firm part of the traditional social order<sup>2</sup>, but it seems even to be in accordance with that part of the Bible from which the missionaries took the Code which was to serve as standard for Christian life! It is not surprising, therefore, that the question of polygamy forms one of the most intricate issues in church discipline on the mission field and in the so-called younger churches. It has to be brought home somehow to these people that the Seventh Commandment may not be taken in the same way as it was understood by Moses and all the godly men of the Old Testament, but that we have to take into account the "historically progressing character of God's revelation."<sup>3</sup>

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is to us 'the day of recreation', and Sunday 'the day of retreat'..." p.40. It will be difficult, however, to prove, that this was the view of the earliest Church. This idea cannot be discovered until the 4th century. See F.E. Brightman, JTS Vol.I p.92 (1900): "The observance of the Sabbath was coming into use in the East by c.375 and was already established in Egypt under Timothy of Alexandria (c.380)." cf. W. Thomas, *Der Sonntag im frühen Mittelalter*, p. 4ff; Art. 'Dimanche' and 'Sabbat' in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*.

1) see § 4.8

2) cf. P. Scheibler, *Polygamie und Taufordnung in der Missionskirche von Kamerun*, EMM 1947 h.3 p.66 ff; W. Hofer, *Das Problem der Kirchenzucht in der Basler Mission in Kamerun*, 1955 (Archives of the Basel Mission, typescript, p. 84 ff.)

3) We mention only one instance in order to show how one tries to solve

If the Decalogue, however, is said to belong to an earlier stage in the history of revelation it cannot be crowned with supreme authority. But if we ultimately take our standard for Christian life - in our special case for marriage - from the New Testament, it is not clear why we should nevertheless in the first instance use an Old Testament Code as the basis for our instruction.

We have dealt with the Seventh Commandment more extensively because it shows impressively what problems of interpretation arise through the use of the Decalogue and how we have - with some excuse - to turn to another authority if we really want to teach Christian ethics. It is basically the same thing which happens with the other commandments, though our embarrassment may be less spectacular there. The fifth commandment, for instance, is frequently used for the sanction of ancestor worship.

What are we really doing with the Decalogue? Our method is usually called "interpretation in the light of the New Testament." But is it really interpretation?<sup>1</sup> At best we take the Ten Commandments as headings in order to tell the catechumens what the New Testament says about

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the problem. The quotation is from a letter of the committee of the Basel Mission addressed to the missionaries in Kamerun in 1930. (see Hofer, op.cit. p. 113 n.3).

"Die Polygamie dulden wir in unseren Gemeinden nicht, wenn Schwarze sich dagegen immer wieder auf das Beispiel von Gottesmännern des alten Bundes berufen, so erinnert uns das daran, dass wir das Alte Testament in unserem Unterricht nicht als Lehrsatz behandeln und ohne weiteres dem Neuen gleichsetzen dürfen; wir müssen unsere Christen auf den geschichtlich fortschreitenden Charakter der Offenbarung hinweisen und das Verständnis dafür wecken, dass Christus seiner Gemeinde eine neue Lebensordnung gegeben hat (Matth. 19,3 ff)."

- 1) Concerning this method see B.D. Eerdman's statement: "Wie in den Heidelbergschen Catechismus de uitlegging van den Decaloog leest, ziet terstond dat wij daar exegese voor ons hebben van zeer bedenkelijke soort... Het zou niet moeilijk vallen volgens deze methode uit het gewoonterecht van een onbeschaafden stam de diepzinnigste zedeleer af te leiden." (Oorsprong en betekenis van de "Tien Woorden", Theologisch Tijdschrift 1903).

worship, the preserving of life, marriage, theft, lying etc. But often these commandments are used to sanction the opinion of a certain Church or tradition. At any rate we have to cram a lot of things into the Decalogue if we want to get them out of it again.<sup>1</sup> There is of course no objection if we take the Ten Commandments, wholly or partly, as headings for the subjects of our ethical teaching. But then we are not justified in speaking of interpretation in the proper sense, pretending that God at Mount Sinai had told the Israelites exactly what we are telling several thousand years later.

J.J. Stamm<sup>2</sup> claims that every minister should explain the precepts of the Decalogue to his hearers according to their original sense.<sup>3</sup> This is of course what interpretation basically means. It is self-evident that after this first step we look for the relation of the Old Testament text - be it in the Torah, the Prophets or the Writings - to the New Testament. It will certainly appear that there are definite relationships, but it is not likely that we shall discover mere identity between the Old and the New Testaments, and above all we have to realize that God's revelation in Christ surpasses by far His revelation at Mount Sinai.

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- 1) There exists a Pentecostal community, called the "Tabernacle Church", the peculiarity of which is to develop the whole New Testament message out of the description of the Tabernacle in Ex. 25-31 and 35-40. These people would certainly not be able to "discover" the whole Christology in those Old Testament texts if they had not read the New Testament before. This kind of "exegesis" may seem rather queer to us, but actually our "interpretation" of the Decalogue often does not differ a great deal from the methods of the Tabernacle Christians, with the exception that it is related to ethics and not to Christology.
  - 2) J.J. Stamm, *Der Dekalog im Lichte der neueren Forschung*
  - 3) J.J. Stamm, *op.cit.* p. 53: "Jeder Theologe hat die Aufgabe, seinen Zuhörern, gleich welchen Alters sie sind, den ursprünglichen Sinn des Gebots zu erschliessen und ihnen das Verständnis für die uns gegebene, konkrete Gestalt desselben zu wecken."

### 3. The question of ethical approach.

In the New Testament the Gospels as well as the Epistles unanimously show a quite definite way of approach to ethical teaching.<sup>1</sup> In Jesus God comes to man and bestows His love and forgiveness upon the sinner, and man is called to believe in Jesus, to follow and to obey him. In the words of Paul: Man is justified by sheer grace, in baptism he is united with Christ and has died to sin and to the Law. Therefore he is called to walk according to this new state, to forgive and to love as he is forgiven and loved by God. He is guided by the Spirit, in the renewal of his mind he is able to discern the will of God<sup>2</sup>, and by following (imitating) Christ and loving his neighbour he fulfils the Law, i.e. he lives according to God's will. His sanctification is grounded on justification, and both are God's gifts in Jesus Christ. Hence it is not possible to speak as if there were two spheres distinct from each other, one concerning faith, the other relating to the Christian life. Justification as well as the new life are fruits of the Spirit; they are two aspects of one reality, of our union with Christ. Nevertheless, as we have to do with two aspects, we are compelled to speak about this reality in two different sentences which, however, stand in a definite relation to each other, the first designing the new state with the indicative form, the second calling man (imperative!) to remain in this state and to think and act accordingly. If we are presenting these facts, our main concern has to be that the second sentence does not appear independent of the first one, that with our second word we do not turn away from God's deeds in Christ to our own works, or, worst of all, that the order of the two sentences be not reversed.

The question has now to be raised whether this peculiar New Testament approach is maintained if we develop our ethics on the basis of the

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1) see § 9-10

2) cf. P. Bonnard, The Discernment of God's will in the Early Church, in the Bulletin 'Laity' of the WCC 1960/10 p. 5 ff.



Decalogue. As a matter of fact it appears that the use of the Ten Commandments makes it very difficult to comply with the New Testament pattern of teaching. By the proclamation of the Decalogue, man is somehow placed in the situation of the people of Israel who "stood afar off, were afraid and trembled"<sup>1</sup>. In the interpretation of the Creed, which in the Reformed catechisms precedes the Decalogue, we are told about faith, justification, forgiveness and eternal life given to us in Christ. But now, in the second part concerning the Law, the situation has considerably changed. Christ has well-nigh disappeared and man is faced with God's revelation at Mount Sinai. We are not told about our union with Christ, about the gift of the Spirit, about God's love shed abroad in our hearts, but are confronted bluntly with part of God's Law in its Old Testament form, are "put under the Law".

God's imperative does not come out of the indicative, we are removed from Golgotha and brought to Mount Sinai. We are not called to come to Jesus Christ and to follow him, because he has already come to us with his love and forgiveness, but we are burdened with the Ten Commandments and told to struggle along our way, knowing that we will never be able to keep them.<sup>2</sup> The commandment of love which is central in the New Testament has disappeared or is at least removed to an insignificant place in the shadow of the Decalogue.

It must be admitted that the authors of the catechisms to some extent have felt the dilemma involved in this approach and tried to escape its fatal consequences. In Luther's catechism the impression that the Decalogue was God's Law for the justified is fairly well ruled out by the position and function given to this Code, i.e. the 'usus elenchticus'. According to this Reformer, the just need no law, like a good tree which needs not to be told to bring forth good fruit. But there is some inconsistency insofar as the Decalogue is praised as the supreme and

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1) Ex. 20,18

2) Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. 115.



unsurpassable standard for the Christian life. Theoretically, however, Luther does not acknowledge the 'third use' of the Law, and therefore he cannot evaluate the exhortations of the New Testament in the sense in which they are given. At any rate, the problem arising with the use of the Decalogue is not solved, but only shifted to another plane. As soon as the 'tertius usus legis' was acknowledged in the Lutheran Church<sup>1</sup>, the issue presented itself in a form similar to that in the Reformed Church.

Calvin tries to put an evangelical note into his dealing with the Law by quoting first the Prologue to the Ten Commandments which he interprets allegorically<sup>2</sup>. But his presentation of the Prologue does not so much intend to raise joy because of salvation, but to prove that God on the ground of his deliverance has the right to ask our obedience. The references to the New Testament are very sparse<sup>3</sup>, the Double Commandment of Love appears only as the summary of the Decalogue<sup>4</sup> and is not related to Christ or the Holy Spirit. Finally the exhortations of Prophets and Apostles are dealt with in one short sentence<sup>5</sup> and appear as mere appendices to the Decalogue. We have stated earlier<sup>6</sup> that Calvin in his Institutes developed his great chapter "About the life of the Christian" from a Christological basis and it is therefore the more striking how in his catechism the use of the Decalogue hindered him from picturing Christian life in relation to Christ.

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1) See Formula Concordiae II/VI.12: "Deinde idem Spiritus ministerio legis utitur, ut per eam renatos doceat, atque in Decalogo ipsis monstret, quae sit voluntas Dei bona et ipsi placens (Rom. 12,2), ut noverint, quibus bonis operibus opera danda sit, quae Deus prae-paravit, ut in illis ambulemus (Eph. 2,10)".

2) Catechism of Geneva, Qu. 137-139

3) see p.365

4) Catechism of Geneva, Qu. 217-223

5) ib. Qu. 231

6) p. 388 ff.

The Heidelberg Catechism establishes a connexion between the part on the Creed and that on the Law by the introduction of the term "Thankfulness". As a matter of fact the whole ethical part stands under this heading.<sup>1</sup> The term thankfulness suggests that our obedience is preceded by something which we have to give thanks for, and Qu. 86 explicitly points to Christ's redeeming and renewing work. Nevertheless the catechism gives the impression of opening quite another chapter. After the introduction of part three (concerning thankfulness), Christ is not mentioned any more; we are left on the stage alone with the Decalogue and the end of the act does not find us as people full of joy and thanks, but as contrite sinners who know that they will never be able to keep God's Law.<sup>2</sup> In other words, according to its position in the catechism, the Decalogue is meant to function as our guide in the new life (third use of the law), but at the end it appears that the law has hardly gone beyond its second use and we are not much farther than in Question 5! This is inevitably the result if we speak about obedience apart from Christ, who is not only our righteousness and redemption, but also our wisdom and sanctification<sup>3</sup>. The term "Thankfulness" is not strong enough to guarantee the ethical approach which we find in the New Testament.

In conclusion we may say that the authors of the great Catechisms made an attempt to base the Christian life on the new reality in Christ, but that the use of the Decalogue in the ethical part of the catechisms obviously hindered them from developing their thoughts in consonance with the Gospels and Epistles. This fact has often been noticed, and Lutheran theologians especially have pointed to this inconsistency in the Reformed catechisms<sup>4</sup>. But from our Reformed standpoint we have to

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1) Der dritte Theil, Von der Dankbarkeit

2) Heidelberg Catechism Qu. 114-115, see § 18.1

3) 1 Cor. 1,30

4) see e.g. E.Chr. Achelis, Der Dekalog als katechetisches Lehrstück, concerning the position of the Decalogue in the Heidelberg Catechism:

ask whether the Lutherans are able to provide a more satisfactory alternative. If the Decalogue is used merely according to its second function ('usus elenchticus') there is too much vagueness in the question of the shaping of Christian life. If, however, the 'tertius usus legis' is acknowledged<sup>1</sup> and the Decalogue taken as standard for the new life there is hardly any difference from the Reformed practice and we are faced with the problems mentioned above.

At any rate our catechisms seem to promote rather than to prevent a moralistic misapprehension of the Biblical message. Lore Schmid<sup>2</sup> has made an inquiry into the religious experience of young people in Switzerland. She investigated particularly the impression made upon the young people by (compulsory) religious education in the Church and has found that ~~what~~ "what is demanded by Christianity stands out much more strongly than what is given to us by Christ".<sup>3</sup>

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"Als Norm des neuen Lebens der Erlösten führt er (= der Dekalog) sich ein, aber die furchtbare Majestät des Gesetzgebers lässt es nicht zur Freude am Gesetz des Herrn kommen, sie erzeugt auch bei den Erlösten und zu Gott bekehrten immer wieder Unsicherheit des Heils und an positivem Gut nur die Sehnsucht nach dem zukünftigen Leben, wo Gottes Wille von den Vollendeten getan werden wird. Ist das Wort Augustins wahr, dass die Seele sich nur von dem nährt, woran sie sich erfreut, so ist eine Nahrung der Seele von dem Dekalog nicht zu erwarten, nur Verschärfung der Kraftlosigkeit und des Hungergefühls." (p.60); see also p. 396 n.2 of our thesis.

- 1) see above p. 415
- 2) Lore Schmid, Religiöses Erleben unserer Jugend, Zollikon-Zürich 1960.
- 3) see her statement on p. 110: "Es ist interessant und aufschlussreich, alle Äusserungen über das im Unterricht Behandelte gesamt- haft zu betrachten. Es fällt dabei nämlich auf, dass die Forderungen des Christentums weit stärker vertreten sind als das, was durch Christus geschenkt wird. So werden die Zehn Gebote 15 mal erwähnt, der Katechismus dreimal, die Nächstenliebe dreimal, die Bergpredigt zweimal. Hingegen wird nur siebenmal von Christus gesprochen. Die durch ihn geschehene Erlösung wird überhaupt nie erwähnt. Nun sind natürlich diese aufs Ganze gesehen sehr spärlichen Stoffervähnungen nicht irgendwie beweiskräftig. Doch müssen wir die Frage im Auge behalten, ob nicht im Bewusstsein unserer Jugend das 'Du sollst' beherrschend ist und das 'Für euch geschehen' daneben völlig zurück- tritt, weil sich von da aus wertvolle Aufschlüsse in bezug auf die Gesamteinstellung dem Christentum gegenüber ergeben würden."

This moralistic misunderstanding of the Gospel is still more evident among the so-called younger Churches. The impact of pagan religion and tribal custom often results in a far-reaching distortion of the Christian Faith. The old religious and tribal law with its rules and taboos is considered to be replaced merely by a new (Christian) law and man's main concern remains the endeavour to live in accordance with a fixed set of rules<sup>1</sup>. There is no need to say that many missionaries as well as indigenous pastors are worried with this misconception of the Gospel, but usually it does not occur to them that the roots of this misapprehension lie not only in the traditional outlook of these people, but also in our questionable ethical approach.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1) see e.g. Adolphe Trüb, "A Study of the traditional outlook of the native community in the Cameroons Province of Nigeria and its impact upon thought and practice of the Christian Church in that province", Thesis Edinburgh 1960 (typescript) p. 311: "Let us remember that many Christians conceive the Church as being a social institution analogous to the tribe but endowed with greater power. Now we know that for the well-being of the individual and of the community in traditional society it was essential that the rules and taboos, which guided and protected the life of the community, be followed. As the Church is conceived as analogous to such a community, the Church members apply the same rules to her... Indeed it is distressing to see how almost every principle or advice is turned into a law." p.312: "In place of the message of love comes the law; preaching, instead of being the proclamation of God's acts of love in Jesus Christ, becomes moral exhortation and the elders' session a court of law."
- 2) This is worked out convincingly by Roland Allen, see e.g. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, London 1927, esp. Ch. V "The Christian Standard of Morals" p. 80-102  
*St. Paul and the Judaizers*, in "The Ministry of the Spirit", Selected Writings of Roland Allen, edited by D.M. Paton, London 1960 p. 115-127.
- Emil Brunner in the third volume of his *Dogmatics* has attacked this Christian moralism with strong words: "Es ist der gesetzliche Moralismus, der wie ein Fluch auf der Geschichte der Christenheit liegt... Diese Gesetzmäßigkeit ist schuld an der Phantasielosigkeit des durchschnittlichen Christentums, die immer wieder die Spontaneität der Liebe dem Statutarischen des Gesetzes opfert und praktisch gar keinen Raum lässt für eine Gestaltung der intuitiv-schöpferi-

There are of course occasional endeavours by catechists to bring the catechetical teaching nearer to the New Testament pattern by attributing to Christ a more significant role in this part of the instruction. But then the Decalogue usually is somehow relativized and there then remains no compelling reason why this code should be used at all.

#### 4. No uniqueness of Christian ethics?

This question does not refer to the specific New Testament approach to ethics which has been considered in the previous section. There is no doubt about uniqueness on this score, though our catechisms do not bring it out very clearly. The Christian according to the New Testament is not confronted with a far-off ideal, he is not put under a Law which he has to fulfil in order to be justified, but he is justified by grace, he has become a new creature, and his new life is a fruit of his union with Christ.

The problem we want to point out in this section concerns the content of our teaching. The mere fact that we use for our ethical instruction an Old Testament Code might suggest that Christian ethics are identical with Jewish ethics. This would signify that in the New Testament there is not revealed anything which surpasses God's revelation concerning the shaping of man's life in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of the traditional idea of natural law we could even go further and assume that Christian ethics do not basically differ from pagan ethics. It has been shown<sup>2</sup> that the Stoic conception of natural law entered Christian theology as early as the second

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schen und unpharisäischen Freiheit der Kinder Gottes. Es ist jener Pharisäismus, der ebenso das Christentum wie das Judentum kennzeichnet und damit in praxi die Rechtfertigung allein aus dem Glauben verleugnet, trotzdem man diese bekennt. Man hat nicht wirklich aus dem Geist zu leben gewagt und ist darum in allem, was Lebensführung heisst, in das Judentum zurückgefallen." (Die christliche Lehre von der Kirche, vom Glauben und von der Vollendung, Zürich 1960 p.339). see also T.E. Jessop, Law and Love, London 1940, especially chapter IV "Beyond goodness and badness" p. 54 ff.

1) see e.g. Thomas Aquinas, p. 284; Calvin, p. 366 f.

2) § 11.



century, and already then it was connected with the Ten Commandments, though the term was not yet defined according to Greek philosophy. But in the Middle Ages it was held that man by his reason could know God's demand, as the Decalogue was identified with natural law which was written in man's heart.

It was mainly the idea of natural law which caused Luther to accept the Ten Commandments as the summary of God's Law for the Christian, as he stressed that the Old Testament Law did not concern us at all. In relation to the Decalogue Luther saw only one difference between pagans and Jews, i.e. that the Jews, who had the Ten Commandments written in their hearts like any other people, moreover received them orally and in writing from God. If Christians keep the Ten Commandments they do so only because these precepts are ingrafted in their hearts by nature and because Moses here is in agreement with nature.<sup>1</sup> There are other sayings of Luther which contradict this point of view<sup>2</sup>, but on the whole it cannot be said that he broke with the Stoic conception of natural law; neither did Calvin, though he is less positive than Luther on this score.<sup>3</sup>

Whether we use the term "natural law" or not we have to acknowledge that the commandments of the second table of the Decalogue are not unknown to pagan nations; they are even found in pre-Mosaic sources.<sup>4</sup> For the first four commandments there are no direct equivalents in natural religion, though they are not quite without parallels<sup>5</sup>. But - as already mentioned - there is much disagreement among the Christian Churches as to how far the Second and Fourth Commandments pertain to Christians. A catechist is thus faced with the following facts:

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1) see p. 312

2) see p. 316 ff.

3) p. 386 ff.

4) see below p.

5) see J.J. Stamm, ThR 27 H.4 p. 305



- The first commandment - and to some extent also the third - really provides a new knowledge unprecedented in pagan religion. The introduction to the first commandment, if it is mentioned at all, must be interpreted allegorically in order to be applicable to everybody.
- The form of the second and fourth commandments is also unusual, but then there is no certainty concerning their validity in New Testament times.
- Commandments five to nine pertain to things which are more or less practised by every people.
- The tenth commandment<sup>1</sup>, if interpreted according to the term "chamad" is not very different from the eighth commandment<sup>2</sup>. If however it is taken in the sense of "hit'awwah" it stresses the attitude of mind and exceeds the average pagan ethics.

This survey shows that it will not be easy for a catechist, especially in a non-Christian country, to explain how far Christian ethics differ from pagan custom. He has two alternatives:

- a) He can acknowledge that God's revelation at Mount Sinai is to a great extent similar to the laws of the pagans. This results in the acceptance of the idea of natural law; but in this case, the revelation at Mount Sinai cannot be called revelation in the proper sense.
- b) He can interpret the Decalogue in such a way that the Commandments of the second table do not appear as doublets of pagan law. But then we have to face the problem of interpretation depicted in § 19.2. We have either to suppose that Israel did not understand properly what God wanted to tell them, or, if we maintain that Jesus revealed God's will in a new sense, there is no reason why we should take the Decalogue as our starting point.

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1) see p. 28

2) so Luther, see p. 28 n.2

In either case, (a) or (b), we differ considerably from Paul's ethical teaching, because the Apostle does not base his ethics on any Old Testament code, nor does he refer to the Old Testament Law in his exhortations. He is convinced that Christ will give his disciples the necessary wisdom so that they know how to behave in the various situations of their life. Love and imitation of Christ are central, and our actions must be determined by the knowledge that we are all members of one body. The fact that love is connected with the imitation of Christ does not allow us to interpret it according to any other standard. Christ has taught us by his life and his words that love means the giving up of the self and includes even one's enemies.

Hence if we proceed from the New Testament it appears clearly that Christian ethics are unique and cannot be identified with pagan (natural) law or with the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the Decalogue proves to be a handicap in our endeavour to expound the uniqueness of Christian ethics. Augustine had thought this Code an adequate means for the interpretation of the Double Commandment of Love, but - as has been indicated in the historical part of our thesis - the Decalogue eventually pushed aside the Double Commandment of Love and introduced the theory of natural law instead. Even a skilful interpreter of the Ten Commandments will not be able to put the new content satisfactorily into the old forms, because it is like putting new wine into old wineskins: "The skins burst, and then the wine runs out and the skins are spoilt."<sup>2</sup>

### 5. Summary.

The relationships between the laws of the pagans, the Decalogue, the Golden Rule and the Double commandment of love will be examined in the following section. Here we only wanted to point out the problems

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1) see § 20. cf. H. Matthes, Theologische Ethik als Geistesethik, Die Dynamik des Heiligen Geistes zur Ueberwindung des Impossible Legis, ZsystTh 1939 p. 68-131.

2) Mt. 9,17.

which arise if in our catechetical teaching the Decalogue is used as basis for ethical instruction. In order to clarify the matter we have distinguished three different points, viewing the issue from various angles. But in practice these points are naturally closely connected to each other: we proceed from the Decalogue and try to give it a New Testament interpretation. But as our basis is essentially in the Old Testament and shows striking affinity with pagan ethics, we are not able to reach the typical New-Testament approach to ethics (based on Christology) and to bring out clearly the new content of ethics which appears with Christ.

The following investigation is not primarily concerned with the problem as to how the Decalogue should and could be given a more satisfactory treatment, but with the question whether in our ethical instruction - which has to be in agreement with the New Testament from the point of view of approach as well as content - we are right to continue taking this code as our basis at all. This research implies an investigation into the place and significance of the Ten Commandments in God's history of salvation (Heilsgeschichte).

## § 20. The relation of God's revelation to ethics.

### 1. The three stages in history.

If we view history in the light of the New Testament, we can distinguish three different stages in relation to God's revelation. The first stage concerns the "nations" or pagans (ethne) who live without knowledge of the true God. Because God has not revealed himself to them they possess neither promise nor Law (in the sense of the Jewish Torah). From among these peoples, God has chosen Israel. He has revealed Himself to the patriarchs and later to the whole people through the mediation of Moses and of priests and prophets. Israel is thus set apart from the other peoples, it is holy, and God has revealed His will

to Israel in promise and law. This is the second stage. With the coming of Christ a third stage begins in God's history with mankind. God's revelation is no longer confined to Israel, and it is now made clear that His purpose from the beginning was the salvation of mankind. This aim is not only proclaimed openly, but it is realized in Christ's death and resurrection. Through union with Christ, man - whether he be pagan or Jew - becomes a new creation<sup>1</sup>, a new humanity<sup>2</sup>. The world is reconciled with God and therefore the distinction between Jews and pagans has become irrelevant.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of the Gospel we understand a lot of things which were unknown to the pagans and could only dimly be perceived by the Jews.<sup>4</sup> We know now what God's aim with mankind from the outset was. In this respect the pagans are more or less blind and in Israel we find considerable ambiguity. The lines of universalism and particularism, for

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1) 2 Cor. 5,17

2) Eph. 2,15

- 3) If we follow Windisch in his understanding of the Sermon on the Mount we have even to distinguish different steps in this third stage. "Gegenüber dem Lehrbegriff der Bergpredigt ist das Evangelium des Paulus wirklich ein Novum, ein 'anderes' Evangelium. Paulus weiss mehr als - sagen wir: Matthäus. Er ist tiefer in das Wesen des Menschlichen und auch tiefer in den Heilsrat Gottes eingedrungen, er ist reicher an Kenntnis und reicher an Erfahrung." (Der Sinn der Bergpredigt, Leipzig 1929, p.135).
- 4) In this respect we have to be on our guard against two errors: the first one is to relativize or even break up the difference between the Covenants, which had been done to a certain extent by the Reformers, especially Calvin. The protest of the older Socinianism (see Diestel, Die socianische Anschauung vom Alten Testamente, in Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie, 7, 1862, p. 709-777) was certainly justified, (see esp. p. 474 f; 760 ff), and it is a pity that it resulted in a reaction on the orthodox side which well-nigh denied all the differences between the two covenants. (Diestel, op.cit. p. 769 ff). So the later Socinianism was driven to the other extreme and committed the error of denying nearly any relationship between the Old and New Testaments. (Diestel, op.cit. p. 772). It maintained, however, that God was the author of both Covenants and refrained therefore from the conclusions drawn by Marcion.

instance, run side by side, and in Judaism the latter became predominant. Nevertheless God in his history of salvation did not depend on man's insight into his plans. He remained the Lord of creation and of history, whether he was acknowledged by man or not.

"God created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth's surface. He fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory".<sup>1</sup> Because God allowed fallen man to "live and move in him"<sup>2</sup>, in His forbearance overlooking the sins of the past<sup>3</sup>, history did not come to an end. In the light of this fact we recognize that the laws of the pagans had to serve for this divine preservation of mankind and that the Law of Israel had a function beyond the mere preservation of the Chosen People.

## 2. The Laws of the pagans and the Golden Rule.

We do not propose here to make a detailed study of pagan law. For our purpose it suffices to point to the generally acknowledged fact that the commandments of the second table of the Decalogue are basic for every people, even in primitive society.<sup>4</sup> They are essential for the

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1) Acts 17,26

2) Acts 17,27

3) Rom. 3,25

4) Often quoted parallels are the 125th chapter of the so-called Egyptian Book of the Dead and the Babylonian Surpu (see H. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament*, Berlin/Leipzig 1926, p. 9 ff. and 324 f.). We can further refer to the "confession of sin" from Mkulwe (East Africa) quoted by F. Heiler (*Das Gebet*, München 1920, p. 88), which shows a striking parallel to the commandments of the second table. Four of the five commandments of Buddhism are parallel to the commandments 6-9 of the Decalogue. Moslem ethics agree with the whole Decalogue, except the Fourth Commandment. This fact, however, is not so significant for our purpose, because this religion is rooted firmly in the Old Testament. But it may be noticed that the Moslems stress the rationality of their belief and their ethics. Concerning the whole question see A. Jirku, *Altorientalischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, Leipzig und Erlangen, 1923.



preserving of the individual and the whole tribe. The disregard of such precepts would lead to anarchy and self-destruction. The fact that man recognizes this and bases his law or custom on these fundamental demands may be considered - as indicated in the previous section - a token of God's loving-kindness who does not want the death of the sinner, but his life.<sup>1</sup>

To this evidence we may add two witnesses, the first from a Lutheran and the second from a Roman-catholic scholar in the realm of the history of religion and ethics:

"Die Bedingungen der menschlichen Gesellschaft gehen in den verschiedenen Weltteilen nicht weit auseinander... Zu diesen allgemeinsten Bestimmungen gehören selbstverständlich Gehorsam den Aeltern gegenüber, Beobachten der Ehregebot (die primitivsten Stämme sind bekanntlich streng monogamisch), Wahrheit und Zuverlässigkeit im Gespräch und Respekt vor dem Leben und dem Eigentum der Stammesgenossen. Solche Verbote und Gebote sind so gewöhnlich, dass - beiläufig gesagt - man a priori vermuten muss, dass die Gebote 4-8 in unsern zehn Geboten, wie die entsprechenden indischen im Brahmanismus und Buddhismus verschieden ausgeprägten Verbotsreihen, und das chinesische hsiao, von primitiver Herkunft und, was den Dekalog betrifft, viel älter als Moses sind, wenn sie natürlich auch durch ihn eine bestimmte Fassung und Ordnung bekommen haben können." (Nathan Söderblom, Das Werden des Gottesglaubens, Leipzig 1916, p.147).

"An der Einheit und Allgemeinheit des sittlichen Bewusstseins der Menschheit, soweit die sog. natürliche Moral, die Moral des Dekalogs in dem von uns erklärten Sinn in Betracht kommt, kann unseres Erachtens kein vernünftiger Zweifel bestehen... Die allgemeinen Grundsätze, dass man das Gute tun, das Böse meiden, dass man kein Unrecht tun, dass man andern nicht zufügen solle, was man nicht erdulden mag u.dgl. begegnen uns praktisch überall. Desgleichen sind die allgemeinen Gebote, dass man nicht ungerecht töten, nicht ehebrechen, stehlen, falsches Zeugnis ablegen solle, in ihrer allgemeinen Form überall bekannt." (Viktor Cathrein, Die Einheit des sittlichen Bewusstseins der Menschheit, Freiburg i.B. 1914, Bd. III p. 563).

For a comparison of the Ten Commandments with Indonesian tribal law and custom see Th. Delleman (and others), Sinai en Ardjoeno, Het indonesische volksleven in het licht der Tien Geboden. Aalten 1946.

- 1) cf. Heinrich Wyder, Die Heidenpredigt, Gütersloh 1954: "Die chinesische Religion ist ihrem Wesen nach ethisches Gesetz, d.h. Versuch des Menschen, die Normen zu finden und zu sanktionieren, in denen das Menschentum bewahrt wird und durch die es, soweit es verletzt



The knowledge of these laws among pagans can lead to all sorts of speculation. Why and how do they know what God revealed to his Chosen People at Mount Sinai? In the Old Testament we hardly find any attempt to explain this fact. The Israelites took it as a matter of course that the fundamentals of humanism were known to the surrounding peoples.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the "Noachian Covenant"<sup>2</sup> is an explanation of the fact that the prohibition of murder was generally acknowledged by man. But only in later Judaism was there developed a theory concerning the laws of the pagans. According to this view, God had given Adam six commandments, to which was added a seventh after the flood, so that the Rabbis spoke of the seven Noachian Precepts<sup>3</sup>. It does not seem, however, that these precepts are derived, at least not all of them, from general pagan law as it presented itself to the Jews.

The Stoic conception of natural law provided another means of explanation, and it is this idea which became predominant in Christian theology. In the creation God has written his law in man's heart, therefore the commandments of the Decalogue are not unknown to pagans. This theory, which appears already in the theology of the second century, was developed and given a firm place in scholasticism, and the Reformers did not repudiate it, but only modified it. As a matter of fact, from the second century onwards the opinion that God had inscribed his law in man's heart was not questioned as such, there was only disagreement as to how far man was able to recognize these commandments without divine revelation. In other words, whether man had to be told this

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wurde, wiederhergestellt werden kann. Sofern es sich um dieses ethische Gesetz handelt, können wir nur staunend feststellen, in welchem Masse Gott es der Vernunft der Chinesen hat gelingen lassen, das Wesentliche der Humanität und ihre fundamentalen Normen zu sehen. Der Begriff der Humanität und die goldene Regel einerseits, die Gebote der Pietät, der Unauflöslichkeit der Ehe und die Lehre von der Gegenseitigkeit der fünf menschlichen Beziehungen andererseits sind ohne Zweifel ein Beweis für überraschend angemessene Erkenntnis bezüglich der Grundlagen und Normen humaner Existenz. In dieser Beziehung sind konfuzianische, taoistische und buddhistische Ethik nahezu parallel und gleichwertig." (p. 48; see further p. 53 ff).

1) see e.g. Amos 1

2) Gen. 9, esp. v. 5-6

3) see above p. 53.

"natural law" anew because he had forgotten it or because his knowledge was obliterated by sin, or whether he was still able to recognize God's will by his natural faculties. The exegesis of Rom. 2,14-15 can be used as a test of the opinion of the respective interpreters concerning our problem.

The history of the conception of "natural law" in the Church shows clearly that this theory is not derived from the Bible, but stems from philosophy, and theology is therefore certainly justified in questioning the traditional teaching on this score. Even if - from a purely exegetical point of view - the pagans in Rom. 2,14 could not be understood in the sense of "Christians of pagan origin", nevertheless it must be admitted that the Stoic conception of "natural law" is alien to Paul's theology.

If we are not satisfied with the mere acknowledgment that some basic laws for the preservation of man and his society are found everywhere, there may be accepted an explanation which does not need to borrow from philosophy. Everyone will admit that man knows - at least on a certain level - what hurts him. He objects to being killed, or to having his wife taken away from him, or to his property being stolen by his fellow-man. Therefore as soon as several people live together they will come to an agreement concerning these things, otherwise the result will be self-destruction<sup>1</sup>. That the establishment of tribal custom or

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1) see V. Cathrein, op.cit. Vol. III p. 564: "Ganz besonders scharf ausgeprägt ist bei allen Völkern das Rechtsgefühl... Jeder will sein Leben, seine Freiheit, sein Weib, seine Kinder, seinen Besitz gegen unbefugte Eingriffe anderer gesichert wissen, aber ebenso sieht er ein, dass er diese Forderung mit Recht nur erheben kann, wenn er andern gegenüber nach demselben Grundsatz handelt."

cf. H. Wyder, op.cit. p. 57: "Die Phänomene göttlichen Wirkens in Schöpfung und Geschichte, die vor den Sinnen und der Vernunft der Menschen offen liegen (Röm. 1,20) haben auch bei den Chinesen keine Erkenntnis Gottes bewirkt, wohl aber die Erkenntnis der Bedingungen menschlicher Existenz in einem die Natur respektierenden Mitmenschentum. Diese Erkenntnis dringt tatsächlich vor zu allgemeinen, sehr

law is influenced to a great extent by experience seems to be corroborated by the widespread knowledge and acknowledgment of the "Golden Rule": That which you hate do not to your fellow, or, in its positive form: Treat others as you would like them to treat you. This maxim is not only found in the New Testament<sup>1</sup> and in Judaism<sup>2</sup>, but it appears in the ethics and religions of many peoples<sup>3</sup>. The positive formulation of the Golden Rule is not confined to the New Testament and it is therefore not possible to say that Jesus revealed a new maxim which was unknown to Judaism or outside Israel. We need not enter here into discussion between ethical idealism and empiricism<sup>4</sup>. It is enough to notice the fact that the pagans actually know the Golden Rule and are not ignorant of the commandments of the second table. It is most likely that Paul in his muchdiscussed statement of Rom. 2,14 merely wanted to refer to this fact.

Concerning the general acknowledgment of the Golden Rule with pagans we may not of course draw far-reaching conclusions, because this maxim by itself does not provide man with a standard which lies outside his opinion concerning the good. This rule has therefore been called an "ethic of naive egoism"<sup>5</sup>. My own conviction, my behaviour, my desire is made the standard to which my fellow-men have to submit themselves. In some cases this rule can even lead to immorality and irresponsibility. If Jesus said that the application of the Golden Rule "is the Law and the Prophets"<sup>6</sup>, this is true only on the pre-supposition that we know the Law and the Prophets, in other words, that God's revelation has already told us what is in agreement with his will.

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zutreffenden Grundsätzen und bis zur goldenen Regel der gegenseitigen Mitmenschlichkeit, die von Jesus als der Inbegriff ethischer Unterweisung in Gesetz und Propheten bezeichnet wird (Mt. 7,12)".

- 1) Mt. 7,12
  - 2) see p. 142 and 145 n.3
  - 3) China (Confucianism), Greece, Rome, Zoroastrism, India (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhs), see RGG<sup>3</sup> II p. 1687 f.
  - 4) see N.H. Sørensen, Christliche Ethik, 1957<sup>2</sup> p. 23 ff.
  - 5) Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, Göttingen 1921, p. 62
  - 6) Mt. 7,12
- cf. Flückiger, Geschichte des Naturrechts, p. 402

The Golden Rule in the mouth of Jesus has thus quite another significance than it has in pagan ethics. According to the background against which it is placed, the evaluation of the Golden Rule varies from the mere predicate "pure egoism" to the high praise that in this maxim "ist das edelste und höchste beschlossen, was je zur Erwerbung eines reinen Herzens und zur Erweckung echter Menschenliebe gesagt ward."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Decalogue and the laws of the pagans.

In the light of the previous section it appears that the Ten Commandments in their entity are not a novelty in the history of mankind and it is therefore not possible to refer to the whole of the Decalogue as revelation in an exclusive sense.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand it would be incorrect to say that no revelation took place at all at Mount Sinai. We have certainly to do with revelation, but with the revelation of Jahwe himself within the history of the tribes of Israel. Jahwe had led the people out of Egypt, and now he gives the interpretation of this event and tells them what is his aim: He establishes a covenant between Himself and the people, they are declared to be Jahwe's possession and shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation<sup>3</sup>. The "Ten Words" are intended to show the people what God expected from them as partners in this covenant, they marked, as it were, the boundary which must be observed by them.<sup>4</sup>

The Words which concern their relation to Jahwe (First to Fourth Commandments) were of course new and may therefore be called "revelation" in the proper sense. The Words of the second table, however, are not singular, i.e. not confined to Israel. Nevertheless they are given an extraordinary significance by their connection with the first table.

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- 1) C.F.G. Heinrici, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Erklärung des Neuen Testaments, III, Leipzig 1905, p. 88.
  - 2) cf. B.D. Eerdmans, The Religion of Israel, Leiden 1947, p. 27 and 32.
  - 3) Ex. 19,4-6. Whether these verses are a later insertion does not concern us here. The fact remains that Israel saw the events at Mount Sinai in this light.
  - 4) see p. 31.

We may see in them a divine proclamation of human rights, a concentration of the basic demands which are essential for the preservation of society: the safeguard of the family (Fifth Commandment), life (Sixth), marriage (Seventh), freedom (Eighth), integrity (Ninth), possession (Tenth)<sup>1</sup>. It is self-evident that such precepts assumed a new character as soon as they were related to Jahwe. Their transgression was no more a mere matter of offence against the neighbour or the tribe, but against Jahwe himself.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Israelites were not given a basically new law with the second table, but the most fundamental of the innumerable precepts of pagan law were taken and were connected with Jahwe's revelation at Mount Sinai. This confirms our proposition of the previous section that man after the fall was not surrendered to anarchy and destruction, but under God's providence was allowed to discover the basic presuppositions which had to be observed in order to preserve life and society. The fact that these fundamental demands were mixed with many other commandments and sometimes even distorted to a certain extent is no proof against the truth that the pagans really were aware of them.

Israel was not elected by Jahwe merely to have a clearer understanding of the laws which are fundamental for the preservation of life and society, but in order to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, i.e. to fulfil a task in God's history with man. Therefore we find many commandments which tend to establish and preserve the uniqueness of Israel. This applies to the first four commandments of the Decalogue and, to a great extent, to the ceremonial law. The casuistic formulated law, which was the common property of the ancient East, on the whole does not manifest Israel's peculiarity, though these commandments are occasionally more humane with Israel than with the other peoples.<sup>5</sup>

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1) see the interpretation of the Ten Commandments, § 4.

2) cf. Eichrodt, Theol. A.T. II/III p. 220 ff.

3) cf. W. Schweitzer, Freiheit zum Leben, Stuttgart 1959, p. 54 f.

4) see above p. 3

5) cf. Eichrodt, Theol. A.T. I p. 38 f; II/III p. 221.



From the point of view of the sources we may thus distinguish two kinds of commandment in Israel. (These two kinds do not necessarily coincide with the distinction between apodictic and casuistic formulated law). On the one hand we have those commandments which were more or less common to all peoples and formed part of their moral, ceremonial or judicial law. On the other hand we find the precepts which are in close connexion with Jahwe's revelation and the election of Israel. The pre-Sinaitic tribal law was not abrogated by the revelation of Jahwe at Mount Sinai, and the Israelites seem not to have been reluctant to take over part of the pagan judicial law. Nevertheless the law taken over from paganism did not remain unaffected by God's revelation, it was related to this revelation and often influenced by it. This is evident from the Decalogue, but also from the relating of the whole Law of the Pentateuch to the events at Mount Sinai, by putting all the precepts in the mouth of Jahwe, or subsequently of Moses. There is thus no basic distinction between religion and ethics in Israel.

We have doubtless to reckon with a historical development in revelation, not only with regard to God's promises and his plans with Israel and mankind, but also concerning his law.<sup>1</sup> His will was not made known absolutely, once and for all, in the Ten Commandments. Jahwe did not only speak at Mount Sinai, but he spoke continually to his people through priests and prophets. New precepts were enacted, which bear the mark of the development in Israel's history. These new commandments may be considered from a double point of view. On the one hand the political and social circumstances underwent great changes after the tribes of Israel had entered Canaan. The "law of the king" and the injunctions concerning the alien and the poor, the precepts in connexion with the land, agriculture and trade could not be derived directly from the "law of the desert". On the other hand Israel came to know Jahwe better and better through his dealings with his elected

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1) see E. Brunner, Die christliche Lehre von Schöpfung und Erlösung, Dogmatik Bd. 2 p. 236 ff.



people, his will was revealed in a clearer way, whether he spoke directly through the prophets or whether Israel's history led to definite conclusions and interpretations concerning God's purposes.<sup>1</sup>

So it can hardly be denied that Israel knew more about Jahwe in the time of the Deuteronomist than they knew about him when he first revealed himself at Mount Sinai. It does of course not follow from this fact that the people were also more obedient in later times. Apostasy manifested itself in the 6th century as well as in the desert, i.e. as soon as the people yielded to pagan conceptions of God instead of listening to and obeying Jahwe. But the fact of a development in revelation remains and can be proved from many commandments. We shall confine ourselves here to the commandments of love as they appear in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

#### 4. The Double Commandment of Love and the Decalogue.

The double commandment of love is of special significance for our purpose, because Jesus, when asked about the greatest commandment, pointed to Dt. 6,4-5 and Lev. 19,18.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, as we have seen<sup>3</sup>, it became customary in the Church to call the Double Commandment of Love the summary of the Decalogue.

The fact that Jesus pointed his questioner to the Double Commandment of Love and not to the Ten Commandments shows clearly that for him God's will is revealed in a clearer and more basic manner in the commandments of love than in any other Old Testament precept. In § 10 we have demonstrated that this double commandment was not only theoretically put in the first place, but that the whole Old Testament Law was judged in the light of it, and that all the precepts were either interpreted in this light, or, if they did not agree with love, abrogated by Jesus.

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1) see Eichrodt, Theol. A.T. II/III p. 222.

W. Beyerlin (Herkunft und Geschichte der ältesten Sinaitradition) is of the opinion that, according to this development in Israel's history, the "Book of Covenant" and the "Cultic Decalogue" (Ex.34) pushed aside the Decalogue from its original place. (p.102, cf. 180).

2) Mk. 12,28-31 par.

3) see p. 288

In the Old Testament, the commandments of love had not yet this central place, nor were they used as criteria. It is true that the "shema" of Dt. 6,4-5 was given a most significant place by the Jews, but it did not prevent them from a legalistic misunderstanding of God's will. The commandments to love one's neighbour<sup>1</sup> gave the Jewish ethics a remarkable tint of humanity, but it did not hinder them from developing a strong particularism. Nevertheless these commandments existed and bore fruit, preventing an unhindered development towards legalism and particularism.

If we view the bulk of the Old Testament commandments in the light of the New Testament we are led to the conclusion that in the commandment of love, God's will was revealed most genuinely, and that all the other precepts should have been understood against the background of the Double Commandment of Love. This commandment was basic, and the rest of the ~~of the~~ Law could at best give the interpretation of this precept, applied in relation to the varied circumstances of Israel's history. For this reason, therefore, it can hardly be maintained that the commandment of love was the summary of the Decalogue. We have to reverse the matter and say that the Decalogue was a first step on the way to the commandment of love, and its "revelation" an event of the early stage of Israel's history.

From the beginning it was God's purpose to reconcile the world with himself by sending his Son into the world, and his dealing with Israel was doubtless a stage in the realization of this aim. But this purpose was not clearly discernible at the beginning of Israel's history, and though later the prophecies more and more pointed in that direction and the whole nation was expecting the Messiah, nevertheless these prophecies were so ambiguous for the Jewish mind that the Jews actually repudiated their Messiah when he finally appeared. Likewise it was from the

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1) Lev. 19,18

outset God's will that man's relationships to him and to each other should be directed by love. Nevertheless this will was not fully recognized at the beginning, and even when in Jesus this love was manifested in a perfect manner the Jews were reluctant to accept it and chose their legalism instead.

There is thus nothing that compels us to suppose that God's will is revealed most clearly and fundamentally in the Decalogue. The negative formulation of the Ten Commandments itself shows that with this Code God has not made known everything he wanted to reveal concerning man's relationship to him and to his fellow men. With these commandments God has marked the border within which he was going to speak and to act further with his Chosen People, and as such the Decalogue has a significant place in Israel's history. But if somebody did not kill it did not follow that he loved his neighbour, not to speak of his enemy. Or the Eighth Commandment did not necessarily prevent the oppression of the poor. Therefore the prophets actually never referred to this commandment in their fight against social injustice. Or the Seventh Commandment did not express fully what God revealed later concerning marriage and the relationship between man and woman.

There is certainly some relation between the Decalogue and the commandments of love, but we are hardly justified in calling the latter the summary of the former. The Decalogue has to be seen as the proclamation of God's rule at an early stage of Israel's history, i.e. at the point of its transition from the state of being a pagan people to that of the Chosen People.<sup>1</sup>

##### 5. Jesus and the Double Commandment of Love.

It is surprising how right the Rabbis were in their expectations concerning the handling of the Torah by the coming Messiah<sup>2</sup>, but it is

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1) on this subject see Joh. Lindblom, Zur Frage der Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion, in Werden und Wesen des A.T., Berlin 1936.  
2) see p. 54.

even more surprising that they did not understand Jesus' attitude towards the Torah and considered him a transgressor of the Law. He really did what they had expected: he interpreted the Torah in a new way, he explained the reasons for the various commandments and revealed the treasures of knowledge hidden in them, so that the Torah appeared as if it were new. But the Rabbis at the same time had expected the impossible, i.e. that the new Torah would not be at variance with the old one given by Moses, which was thought unchangeable. Jesus did not agree with all the Old Testament commandments, and to a great extent he did not justify the interpretation the Old Testament Law was given by the Scribes. They had been looking for a Messiah who would interpret the Torah in the traditional way, though surpassing the traditional skill, and in this anticipation they were greatly disappointed.

We may say that God's demand as revealed by Jesus was at the same time old and new. Answering the question, what was the greatest commandment, Jesus did not reveal a new command; nevertheless the Double Commandment of Love appeared definitely in a new light.<sup>1</sup> The commandments to love God and the neighbour were not presented by him in line with the other Old Testament precepts, neither were they declared to be *primi inter pares* - which could have been accepted by the Rabbis - but they were singled out and joined in such a way that this double commandment now became the criterion for the whole Old Testament Law. But Jesus went even farther than that. It would be possible to imagine that the Double Commandment of Love might be interpreted by the Old Testament Law, e.g. by the Decalogue. (This was the opinion of Augustine, and, to a considerable degree, of the Reformers). As a matter of fact, however, it was Jesus himself who gave the interpretation of this commandment, an interpretation which by far surpassed what had been recognized as God's demand in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it can be called a

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1) see § 10. cf. Elert, *Das christliche Ethos*, p. 356 f.

2) "To man under the law, the idea of loving his enemies is clean contrary to the law of God, which requires men to sever all connection with their enemies and to pass judgement on them." Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 127.

"new commandment"<sup>1</sup>. The Sermon on the Mount is not an interpretation of the Decalogue, as is often held, but the interpretation of some aspects of God's genuine demand which is identical with the Double Commandment of Love.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' transgressions of the Old Testament Law - whether real or alleged - were again mere interpretations of the greatest commandment. Any limitation with regard to love was abrogated. To love one's neighbour does not only mean not to kill him, but not even to hate him; it even includes praying for one's persecutors. So the limits which could be applied to the term "neighbour" are annulled. The conception of neighbour is no longer confined to the member of one's people or religion, but it includes even the foreigner and the enemy.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the case of the love of God all limitations are put away. To love God cannot mean in the first place to observe a certain set of rules and precepts, but this love manifests itself in the acceptance of God's gifts (forgiveness and love) and in a life which is determined by these gifts.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1) Joh. 13,34. cf. Elert, Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade, p. 140: "Wenn er (= Jesus) nach Johannes von einem 'neuen Gebot' spricht, so ist das eben ein wirklich neues Gebot, nicht eine blosse Dekalog-Interpretation." see further de Boer, The imitation of Paul, p.56: "The newness is in the new situation in which the disciples now live, the new ground from which their love springs, and the new moving force with which it must now come to expression."
  - 2) In the view of the Sermon on the Mount and many other sayings of Jesus it is strange that Bultmann, concerning the preaching of Jesus, should speak of a "Verzicht auf jegliche Konkretisierung des Liebesgebotes durch einzelne Vorschriften." Theol. N.T. p. 18.
  - 3) Mt. 5,44; Lk. 10,29 ff.
  - 4) cf. Bultmann, Das christliche Gebot der Nächstenliebe, in 'Glauben und Verstehen' I Tübingen 1954 p. 229-244.

Bonhoeffer has laid particular stress on the term *ὑπερβόλον* in Mt.5,47, calling it the "word which controls the whole chapter": "What makes the Christian different from other men is the "peculiar", the *ὑπερβόλον*, the "extraordinary", the "unusual", that which is not "a matter-of-course". This is the quality whereby the better righteousness



The Double Commandment of Love is no longer "Law" in the proper sense.<sup>1</sup> It is not a "Word" which comes from outside and somehow stands between man and God, like the "Ten Words" of the Decalogue and the other commandments of the Old Testament, but "the Word became flesh; he came to dwell among us"<sup>2</sup>. God's love is personified in Jesus Christ, in him God himself has come to man.<sup>3</sup> The adequate answer to this divine coming cannot consist in the observance of some commandments and prohibitions, but it is realized in man's coming to God, i.e. in his faith in Jesus and his following him. The momentousness of this personal relationship between Jesus and his disciples is evident throughout the

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exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It is 'the more', the 'beyond-all-that'. The natural is  $\epsilon\kappa\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$  (one and the same) for heathen and Christian, the distinctive quality of the Christian life begins with the  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ . It is this quality which first enables us to see the natural in its true light. Where it is lacking, the peculiar graces of Christianity are absent. It cannot occur within the sphere of natural possibilities, but only when they are transcended. The  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$  never merges into the  $\epsilon\kappa\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ . That was the fatal mistake of the false Protestant ethic which diluted Christian love into patriotism, friendliness, and industriousness, which in short, perverted the better righteousness into justitia civilis. Not in such terms as these does Jesus speak. For Him the hall-mark of the Christian is the "extraordinary". The Christian cannot sink to the world's level, because he must always remember the  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ ." (The Cost of Discipleship, p. 131-132).

- 1) see ThWNT II 550. cf. E. Brunner, Dogmatik III p. 337-8, who stresses especially this aspect in the newness of the commandment of love: "Neu ist es (= das Gebot) dadurch, dass das Wort "Liebe" durch das Geschehen am Kreuz einen neuen Sinn gewonnen hat und dass dieses Gebot nicht mehr das erste, sondern das zweite ist, nämlich das, was sich als Imperativ aus dem Indikativ der Rechtfertigung des Sünders ergibt, also nicht mehr ein Gesetz, sondern die Umschreibung dessen, was schon im Geschenk Gottes enthalten ist." cf. his chapter "Das Liebesgebot und das Gesetz", ib. p. 344-352.
- 2) Joh. 1,14
- 3) see p. 133 ff.



Synoptics and is clearly expressed in John's Gospel: "Dwell in me, as I in you... Dwell in my love"<sup>1</sup>. In this personal relationship the Law cannot attain an independent and autonomous position. The doing of God's will is of course basic, but it is accomplished by this "dwelling" in him who has loved us, or, in the terminology of the Synoptics, by man's coming to Jesus and following him.

How Paul has taken up the message of Jesus and how he has applied it to those who had never been under Jewish Law has been developed in a former section.<sup>2</sup> His ethics are based on our union with Christ (in baptism, eucharist and as members of his body), and on the conceptions of imitation and love. The Old Testament Law plays well-nigh no part in his exhortations, because through love the Law is fulfilled, and what love means in the manifold circumstances of our life is revealed to us by the Spirit.

## 6. Summary.

At the beginning of this section we have spoken of three stages of history, and in the following exposition it has become manifest that this distinction is not a theoretical construction, but is related to God's history of revelation and salvation. Man's knowledge concerning God's will is not the same at each stage, though we can distinguish a certain continuity. The pagans, though being outside the realm of God's revelation, nevertheless have a certain knowledge concerning several laws which are essential for the preservation of life and society. Israel, the Chosen People who lived in the realm of God's revelation, had of course a much clearer insight into God's demand. The basic precepts, which were already acknowledged by the pagans, are not set aside, but taken up as rules of the Covenant (e.g. in the second table of the Decalogue). Through their relation with the revelation of Jahwe himself their purpose becomes clear and these precepts appear no longer as mere human agreements, but as the expression of

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1) Joh. 15,4.9

2) see § 9 and 10.5

Jahwe's will who is the creator and preserver of mankind and who has chosen a people to become his instrument in the 'Heilsgeschichte'. But the Ten Words spoken at Mount Sinai were not God's last words. The revelation went on, and in the course of Israel's history Jahwe's purpose and demand eventually appeared in clearer outline. God's righteousness and loving-kindness are reflected in his ordinances given to the Chosen People and are most impressively seen in the commandments to love him and the neighbour.

Then, at the third stage, God revealed himself as fully as was possible in human history. After the coming of Christ man is no more without God's Word like the pagans, he is no longer under God's Word which faces him from outside like the Jews, but he is met directly by the Word which has become flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. Again, the basic precepts which had been given to Israel were not annulled; on the contrary, Jesus revealed which precepts were really basic, i.e. the commandments to love God and the neighbour. By this double commandment, which reveals God's genuine demand, the other precepts of the Old Testament are either fulfilled or abrogated. The abrogation concerns those commandments which were either promulgated because of man's sins (e.g. the law of retaliation or the precept concerning divorce) or because they had a preparatory function in the history of Israel. The step from the second to the third stage might even be called greater than that from the first to the second one. Jesus Christ not only singled out the Double commandment of love, interpreting it in an unprecedented manner, but it was only from now on that man could really fulfil God's will, because he was given the love which was asked from him.

If we speak about ethics and God's Law it is essential to distinguish these different stages. It is certainly true that God's will is one and that it is constant. His final purpose is the same in the different stages mentioned above. Nevertheless we may not forget that we can

speak about this divine will only from the point of view of man, according to our respective stage in history. God's will is made known to man by revelation in history according to the necessities, in agreement with the development of God's plan of redemption. We must not be misled by certain similarities which appear in the laws at the different stages. The laws of the pagans are not identical with the Decalogue. The heathen have no knowledge of the first table, and the commandments of the second table do not appear in the same light in pagan ethics as they do in Israel where they are integrated into the revelation of Jahwe himself. But even in the history of Israel there is a development in revelation and consequently also in the knowledge of God's will. The commandments of love are not yet contained in the Decalogue, though after the revelation of these commandments the Decalogue could be understood in a new light. God's final revelation in Christ does not just corroborate the Old Testament Law, but it introduces something new, although the onset of the new development is already discernible in the Old Testament.

We may say that the state of things, i.e. the given revelation in a previous stage, becomes clearer and more distinct if considered in the light of the successive revelation, where the former is somehow taken up in the latter. But we cannot reverse the matter and contend that the latter was already existent in the former in such a manner that it was recognizable by man.<sup>1</sup> It was of course already existent in God's purpose and will, but man does not know God's purpose and will except by revelation. The recognition of this fact forbids the identification of natural law, Decalogue, commandment of love as contained in the Old Testament, and Double Commandment of Love as interpreted by Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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1) This is the most problematic point in Calvin's interpretation of the Old Testament.

2) cf. H. Wyder, Heidenpredigt, p. 58: "Zudem darf nie übersehen werden, dass das Gesetz Gottes jenes vierfache Gebot von der Liebe zu Gott

From this point of view it is evident that the conception of the Decalogue in its entirety either as natural law, or as summary of the Old Testament Law, or even as interpretation of the Double Commandment of Love causes problems which can hardly be solved in a satisfactory way. This difficulty appears clearly both in Luther's and Calvin's dealings with the Decalogue, though both of them approach the question in a different manner.

## § 21. God's commandment as basis of Christian ethics.

### 1. The relevance of the divine imperative.

For Israel it was plain that God's revelation did not only concern the knowledge of God's character, his gifts and promises, but also his demand. This is evidenced by the connecting of the Decalogue with the Sinai-tradition and the relating of all the Old Testament commandments to Jahwe's revelation. The Commandments of the second table of the Decalogue, though not unknown in pagan ethics, are joined to the Words of the first table concerning Jahwe's self-revelation, and consequently are considered as his law given to Israel. God's Word is the exclusive

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als Grundlage aller weiteren Gebote einschliesst und dass gerade dieses Gebot in der chinesischen Religion und Ethik keinen Platz hat. Es ist eine Fehlerquelle in der theologischen Beurteilung des Heidentums, wenn dieser Unterschied zwischen dem Gesetz Gottes und dem Ethos der Heiden immer wieder übersehen wird."

It seems to us that this fact is overlooked by G. Wingren (Creation and Law, Edinburgh 1961) who contends that the natural law is in harmony with the commands which Christ gives in his Word (p.42-43) and who wants us in our preaching to start with "the common human experience of guilt" (p.183). We cannot see any reason why after God's full revelation in Christ we ought to take our starting point at an earlier stage, which in our foregoing investigation appeared as being outside God's revelation at all. If we take the New Testament as our criterion - and why should we not be justified in doing so? - it is hardly possible to blame "modern theology" for introducing a novelty into the Church (p.156). This may seem so

foundation of Jewish ethics, i.e. the Torah. "He has showed you, o man, what is good"<sup>1</sup>. The development of legalism in Judaism is to be understood against this background.

In the New Testament we find intrinsically the same approach. Man is constantly pointed to God's demand as made known in his revelation, though the legalistic outlook of Judaism is shattered. Jesus occasionally points to Old Testament commandments, but he often gives new interpretations and even abrogates several of the Old Testament precepts. He teaches God's will with divine authority, not only by his words, but also by his life. By following him, by obedience to his words, and by imitation of his example, the will of God is fulfilled. Paul in his epistles proceeds from the same starting point. It has been worked out in a former chapter that all the exhortations in Paul's epistles are based on our union with Christ and on his example. Christ is made our knowledge and God has revealed himself fully in his Son, therefore Jesus Christ is the only legitimate source for the shaping of the Christian life. The commandment of love has a central position in Paul's exhortations, not as an autonomous principle, but in close connexion with Christ's life and his directions given to us either by word of mouth or by his Spirit. It has also been pointed out that the imperative in the epistles is grounded on the indicative. In Christ, man is a new creation, he is made a child of God and God's love is poured out in his heart, he has been given the Spirit from which

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only if we go back merely as far as Luther or even Justin Martyr and Irenaeus (p. 166-167), but certainly not if we take the New Testament as the basis of our theological thinking.

(Wingren has developed similar thoughts in "Theology in Conflict", Edinburgh 1958, and in his study on "Evangelium und Gesetz" in 'Antwort', Festschrift Karl Barth 1956 p. 310 ff.)

1) Mic. 6,8

emanate the fruits of the new life. Because this is a reality, therefore we are called to live in this new reality, to walk according to the Spirit, in one word, to draw the necessary conclusions for the shaping of our life.

In the following centuries the Church did not depart from the conviction that God's revelation is constitutive for Christian ethics. Nevertheless we noticed a fatal development, caused by a distorted conception concerning the meaning of Christ's death. Jesus was primarily conceived as the new law-giver, man's obedience to his law was given priority and God's grace appeared somehow as reward for man's obedience and faithfulness. The Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas reveal with alarming clarity that this fatal change had already taken place at the beginning of the second century, and there is plenty of evidence that in the catechetical instruction, moral teaching widely preceded the instruction in faith. Eventually the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments even became parts of the 'disciplina arcana'.

Though the double commandment of love was considered the verbum abbreviatum of God's Law, nevertheless the Old Testament was made the subject matter of ethical teaching. In the theological thinking of the second century the Decalogue attained growing importance as a summary of God's Law and embodiment of God's will. The introduction of the Stoic conception of natural law and the Gnostic distinction between different kinds of law contributed to the extraordinary position attributed to the Ten Commandments, though the extreme conclusions of the Didascalia did not become common property of the Church, or at least were not stated with such absolute consistency.

In spite of these considerable changes, the tenet that God's demand was made known in his revelation was not questioned, though with regard to ethics the Old Testament was more or less given priority over the



New. But in the Middle Ages, under the influence of Greek philosophy, more and more autonomy was attributed to man's reason, and nature appeared as sufficient source for the knowledge of God's will. But actually this appeared only theoretically so. We have seen that with Thomas Aquinas "nature" and "reason" were teaching him nothing else than what he had derived beforehand from God's revelation in Scripture. It is significant that Thomas in his practical teaching based his ethical instruction on the Double Commandment of Love and the Decalogue.

## 2. The different approach of Luther and Calvin.

The Reformers intended to go back to Holy Scripture and to set aside any tradition which hindered a genuine understanding of God's revelation. In relation to ethics this signified that they based their teaching exclusively upon God's Law made known to us in the Bible. Nevertheless it appears that they could not free themselves wholly from the traditional doctrine of God's Law. This is evident especially in their taking over to a certain degree the conception of natural law and in their outstanding evaluation of the Decalogue.

The statements of Luther concerning the conception of lex naturalis are not unanimous. Sometimes he takes the term in the sense of the Fathers: the law which had been engraved on the human heart at the time of creation, but which was obscured or even blotted out by sin and could therefore only be recognized through revelation. At other times he speaks rather in terms of scholasticism: the Ten Commandments are known to everybody because they agree with the natural law which is identical with the Golden Rule and the commandment of love; but when under the exclusive pressure of New Testament texts, the Reformer strongly stresses the inability of nature and reason in the recognition of God's demand.<sup>1</sup>

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1) The evidence is given on p. 313-319. The Lutheran scholars do not agree concerning the part the conception of natural law actually played in Luther's theology. See e.g. p. 316 n.1.

Calvin, though more reserved in the use of the term "natural law", nevertheless applies this conception, not so much in order to demonstrate a natural knowledge of God's Law, but in order to stress man's inexcusability in relation to his transgressions.

As to the Decalogue both Reformers were influenced to a great extent by the tradition of the Church, but both treated this Code in a different manner, because they did not follow the same path in their synthesis of tradition and New Testament evidence.

Luther was convinced that with his use of the Ten Commandments as a main part of his catechism he was following the tradition which had been in use since the beginning of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> (As a matter of fact the Ten Commandments had been made a subject matter of "catechetical" teaching, i.e. preparation for auricular confession, only in the 13th century)<sup>2</sup>. By reducing the whole Law - which in the earlier Middle Ages was expressed by the catalogues of sins and virtues - to the commandments of the Decalogue, Luther was following the suggestions of Johannes Wolff and Savonarola. Nevertheless we must acknowledge that Luther's erroneous conclusion concerning the use of the Decalogue in Church history was somehow supported by the extraordinary position the Ten Commandments had been given in theology since the second century and the use which had been made of this Code by Augustine.

Calvin, without reference to Church history, accepted Luther's scheme of catechetical instruction. We have pointed out how Calvin in his first edition of the "Institutes" followed Luther's Small Catechism and how his catechism of 1537 was shaped after the "Institutes"<sup>3</sup>. The Catechism of Geneva of 1541 did not deviate basically from Calvin's first catechism, except that the Decalogue was given another place

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1) see p. 308

2) see § 15

3) § 17.1-2.

which was more in accordance with Calvin's peculiar conception of the Law. Here, then appears the different synthesis made by the two Reformers of tradition with New Testament teaching.

Luther and Calvin agreed that God's will concerning the shaping of our life was made known to us by revelation and is thus discernible in the Holy Scripture. They further agreed that the expression of this will appeared most clearly in the Decalogue and that this Code therefore was to be used as a piece of the Catechism. This was thus their presupposition taken over from tradition. But in relating this tenet to the New Testament message they came to fairly divergent conclusions. Each of them was stressing and developing a different aspect of the New Testament teaching, underrating the opposite aspect.

Luther highly emphasized Paul's teaching that the Christian was no longer under the Law, but was guided by the Spirit and as a new creature brought forth good fruit and therefore did not need any commandment. Hence the just has no need of the Decalogue, which is the summary of God's Law. But because man is at the same time righteous and sinner, he is still under the Law as far as he is a sinner. The confession 'simul justus ac peccator' necessitates the conclusion: at the same time without law and under the law. Paul consistently marked the temporal difference: before and outside Christ = under the Law; in Christ = not under the Law. Luther transforms this temporal succession in a sort of static coexistence, splitting the faithful into two parts.<sup>1</sup> From the systematic point of view he does not know really what to do with the exhortations of Paul's epistles: they are not necessary for him who is in Christ; they are needed only as far as one is not in Christ, but then they have to be conceived of as Law. The most perfect expression of God's Law, however, is the Decalogue. So from the point

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1) "Denn das ist doch, wenn man von der reformatorischen Lehre von Gesetz und Evangelium her an Paulus herantritt, die auffallendste Differenz: dass aus dem Nacheinander in einer einmaligen, nicht wieder rückgängig zu machenden Wende das reformatorische Schema ein

of view of Luther's conception of Law and Gospel the Pauline exhortations are rather an embarrassment.

It is hardly necessary to note that Luther does not always consistently cling to his scheme of Law and Gospel. Though he does not theoretically acknowledge a third use of the Law, in practice he recognizes the value of the New Testament exhortations as is evident from his interpretations of Paul's epistles, and even some sayings concerning the Decalogue point in that direction. It is this inconsistency which causes the perplexing disagreement between Lutheran scholars as to their master's actual doctrine of Law and Gospel. But in principle the Law for Luther has only a sin-revealing function and therefore in his Catechism the Decalogue stands in the first place.

Calvin, on the other hand, stresses the relevance of the Law for the shaping of the Christian life. Therefore the 'tertius usus' is the main function of the Law, and in his second catechism the Law is dealt with after the explanation of the Creed. Unlike Luther, Calvin estimates highly the positive value of the exhortations in Paul's epistles. Nevertheless, these New Testament exhortations hardly appear in his catechism, because for Calvin God's will is made known in the Law and the whole Law is summarized in the Decalogue. This emphasizing of the third use of the Law (= the Ten Commandments) obscures the great change brought about by God's revelation in Christ. The opposition of Law and Gospel which is strongly marked in Paul's epistles and maintained by Luther is smoothed down and the antithesis becomes a synthesis. Virtually Christ does not bring in a new age and a new Covenant<sup>1</sup>,

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eigentümlich gleichzeitiges Nebeneinander, sozusagen eine Wende in Permanenz gemacht hat, die in dem Verdacht steht, gar keine Wende zu sein..." Ebeling, Erwägungen zur Lehre vom Gesetz, ZThK 1958 (55) p. 284.

- 1) cf. H. Thielicke, Ethik I p. 197/8: "Aus Weihnachten ist nur ein Advent geworden, vielleicht ein besonders lichterreicher Advents-sonntag mit fünf Kerzen, aber nicht das Christfest mit seiner Wende der Aeonen."

because in relation to the substance (= doctrine!) there is only one Covenant. What God has spoken in the beginning of time is of eternal value, the Gospel added nothing to the Law.<sup>1</sup>

So it appears that both Reformers each recognized and stressed a certain aspect of Paul's theology, but that they each departed from Paul in another respect, because the traditional evaluation of the Decalogue as the highest expression of God's demand hindered them from following Paul unreservedly in his ethical approach.

Luther understood perfectly the momentous alteration which happened in history with the coming of Christ, but he failed to see that the exhortations in the New Testament have another character than the Old Testament Law. (It is true that Luther did not accept the Decalogue as summary of the Law because it was given at Mount Sinai, but because - according to his own words - this Code was the clearest expression of the natural law. But it is not unlikely that Luther's catechism would have been given another shape if the Reformer had not been influenced so much by the Roman tradition which used the Decalogue as summary of God's law, mainly for tracking down sins in auricular confession).

Calvin was much concerned about God's demand with regard to the Christian life, but as he underrated the significance of the history of revelation he was not able to start from the new reality of the New Covenant as Paul did. We have pointed out Calvin's inconsistency in the Institutes<sup>2</sup> which, unfortunately, did not influence his catechism. Here again we wonder what shape his catechism, especially the part on the Law, would have been given if he had not been influenced by the traditional evaluation of the Decalogue already accepted from late medieval theology by Luther.

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1) see p. 365 ff.

2) see p. 388 ff.

### 3. The 'triplex usus legis'<sup>1</sup>.

The different evaluation of the Law has found its expression in the doctrine of the triplex usus legis (threefold use of the Law). The first use (usus civilis or usus politicus) does not concern us here. Luther as well as Calvin is agreed that God's Law pertains to the ordering of human society and the state, and according to Agricola this was the only legitimate function of the Old Testament Law. The main use for Luther, however, is its sin-revealing function (usus Theologicus, Spiritualis, Sanctus = second use<sup>2</sup>). The proper use of the Law consists in its revealing man's transgressions, in its accusing and condemning him in order to make him ready for the acceptance of the Gospel. Besides these two uses Luther does not acknowledge a further function of the Law, though there are sayings which point in the direction of the 'tertius usus'<sup>3</sup>. Calvin diverges from Luther in attributing to the Law a third function, which he calls the main use of the Law (usus normativus, didacticus, in renatis<sup>4</sup>). Melancthon, unlike Luther, teaches a third use of the Law, and after bitter discussion between different factions in the Lutheran Church<sup>5</sup>, the doctrine of the third use was accepted in the Formula Concordiae (FC)<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless the accents are slightly different in Calvin's conception and in the Lutheran doctrine. Calvin stresses the teaching and exhorting function of God's Law for the faithful, whereas the FC maintains that also in its third function the Law primarily has to reveal man's sins and to condemn. The second and third uses in the FC are not so much distinguished in relation to the function of the Law, but with regard to the man to whom the Law is applied<sup>7</sup>. The second function is related to the sinner who has not yet been prepared for the

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1) see L. Haikola, *Usus Legis*, Lund 1958

G. Ebeling, *Zur Lehre vom triplex usus legis in der reformatorischen Theologie*, ThLZ 75, 1950 Sp. 245 ff.

2) see p. 324

3) see p. 329 f.

4) see p. 377

5) Second Antinomian dispute

6) FC II pars VI

7) see Haikola, *op.cit.* p.31 and 57 ff.



Gospel, the third function pertains to the believer who, however, is not free from sin and has therefore to be reminded of this fact by means of the Law.

What are the presuppositions of this doctrine of the triplex usus legis? As to the second use of the Law there is no question that the institution of auricular confession paved the way for the close connexion between the Old Testament Law and man's sin. It has been demonstrated that the catalogues of virtues and sins of the book of confession were eventually related to the Ten Commandments, and that even before the Reformation it was suggested to make the Decalogue the main means for the investigation of the soul. In 1520 Luther still used this Code as a mirror of confession<sup>1</sup>.

This theory of the second use of the Law was vindicated by some New Testament texts, especially Gal. 3,24 and Rom. 7,7-25. The former passage could of course only be used by means of a forced interpretation which was in striking contrast to its context. Luther somehow synchronized the two times clearly distinguished by Paul (before Christ under the Law, in Christ free from the Law), transplanting them into the heart of the faithful who are said to be at the same time free from the Law and subject to it. Rom. 7,7 ff was considered to depict the life of the Christian and thus seemed to confirm plainly the doctrine of the second use. To-day, with very few exceptions, the interpretation of this chapter as describing the life of the faithful is not maintained by New Testament scholars. Hence the main New Testament texts used for the corroboration of the theory concerning the second use of the Law are no longer at our disposal. Nevertheless several Lutheran theologians maintain that their interpretation of the Law (i.e. its second use as main use) is in agreement with Paul's intention.<sup>2</sup>

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1) see p. 308

2) see e.g. G. Ebeling, *Erwägungen zur Lehre vom Gesetz*, ZThK 1958 p. 270 ff.

W. Elert (*Das christliche Ethos*) in his chapter on the Decalogue

Agricola as a matter of fact had already questioned the use made of the Old Testament Law in order to effect recognition of sin and repentance. According to him, true repentance comes from the preaching of the Gospel and not from the Law. In the first Antinomian dispute no agreement was attained, because Luther and Agricola had different definitions of the conception of Law. Agricola connected the term Law primarily with the Old Testament Torah, and in so doing he was certainly in agreement with Paul's terminology. Luther, on the other hand, maintained that everything which "shows us what we have not though we ought to have it"<sup>1</sup> was to be considered as "law", including the Lord's Prayer and Christ's suffering and death. Law, here, does thus not appear in the first place as a set of rules, but it has somehow a functional significance, i.e. as a sin-revealing factor. Hence Luther acknowledged in theory that sin could be revealed by the preaching of the Gospel, which was Agricola's concern, but in practice it was the Decalogue which had to be used for this aim.

Calvin's concern for the third use of the Law has already been pointed out in a previous section.<sup>2</sup> On the ground of the New Testament exhortations he could emphasize this aspect with strong reasons, only, like Luther, he deviated from Paul's terminology, though in another respect. He does not take into account the fact that Paul cannot possibly speak of a third use of the Law, because the Christians are no longer under the Law. Paul's exhortations proceed from a new basis, i.e. the new reality created in Christ, and appear in quite a new light. The believer is not guided any longer by the Old Testament Law, but by the Spirit, and the exhortations in the Epistles are not just interpret-

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(p. 83-91) - which is in several respects illuminating - comes to the interesting conclusion that the Decalogue in the New Testament remains what it has been, i.e. a law of retaliation, but that it is interpreted at the same time as commandment of love! (p.90).

1) p. 347

2) see p. 448 f.

ations of the Law, but conclusions drawn from this new reality and applications of the Double Commandment of Love.

In conclusion we are driven to ask whether this doctrine of the triplex usus legis, the first and the second Antinomian disputes, and the irksome discussions between Lutheran and Reformed scholars, are not caused to a great extent by the fatal equation taken over from medieval theology:

Revelation of God's demand = Law as summarized in the Decalogue = natural law.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. New developments in contemporary theology.

In the past decades the relationship of Law and Gospel has been one of the most vividly discussed issues in theology. Karl Barth's pronounced placing of the Gospel before the Law and his criticism of Luther - or at least of a certain interpretation of him by the Lutherans - on this score, has caused much controversy which has led to quite new and unexpected developments. On the one hand the Lutheran scholars gave their special attention to the distinction between Luther's own view and the later development in Lutheran theology, on the other hand they entered into discussion with Barth (and with each other!) and, not unaffected by the power of Barth's theology, tried to attain a new standpoint. We cannot, however, speak of a Lutheran front, because these scholars disagree in important points concerning Luther's conception of Law. In the following we shall not deal with those Lutherans who, in spite of the acknowledgment that Luther diverges from Paul in his definition and application of the term Law, nevertheless maintain that the Reformer's interpretation may not be infringed or modi-

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1) Apol. IV,7. cf. the question by Edm. Schlöcker, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften, München 1940 p. 414 f: "Von dem Unterschied zwischen Nomos und Paraklese bei Paulus und zwischen 'nomos' und 'entole' bei Johannes her ergibt sich die Frage ob der Unterschied zwischen alttestamentlichem Gesetz und neutestamentlicher

fied, but must be vindicated against all questioning from within or without their confession.<sup>1</sup>

Karl Barth in his stimulating treatise "Evangelium und Gesetz"<sup>2</sup> even in the title reverses the traditional sequence 'Law and Gospel'. His definition of the Law as the form of the Gospel<sup>3</sup> appears in almost every discussion concerning the subject Gospel and Law<sup>4</sup>. It was certainly necessary to stress the priority of the Gospel and to point out the positive relationship between Gospel and Law (according to the third use of the Law) over against a theology which conceived these items primarily as antitheses, consistently and systematically putting the Law before the Gospel. In so doing Barth not only vindicated the

Mahnung hinreichend gewahrt ist, wenn innerhalb der Lehre von einem und demselben ewigen, unabänderlichen Gesetz lediglich die drei usus dieses Gesetzes unterschieden werden."

- 1) e.g. Ebeling, G., Erwägungen... p. 305.  
see also Edm. Schlink (Gesetz und Evangelium, in ThEx 53, München 1937) who is anxious not to step outside the Lutheran Bekenntnisschriften. We note only his definition of Law: "Gottes Gesetz sind die in Gottes Wort geoffenbarten 10 Gebote". But compare on the other hand his study in "Antwort" (see below).
- 2) ThEx 32, 1935, reprinted in 1961 as NF 50 of the same series.  
cf. Barth, KD II/2 § 36-39.
- 3) "Das Gesetz ist nichts anderes als die notwendige Form des Evangeliums, dessen Inhalt die Gnade ist."
- 4) e.g.  
H. Diem, "Evangelium und Gesetz" oder "Gesetz und Evangelium"?  
EvTh 3 1936 p. 361 ff.  
K. Mittring, Gesetz und Evangelium im Neuen Testament, EvTh 1938  
p. 430 ff.  
W. Elert, Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade, München 1948, p. 135 ff.  
H. Thieliicke, Theol. Ethik, Tübingen 1951, p. 188 ff.  
P. Althaus, Gebot und Gesetz, Gütersloh 1952, p. 24 f.  
H.J. Iwand, Gesetz und Evangelium, in Evangel. Kirchenlexikon,  
Göttingen 1956  
H. Gollwitzer, Zur Einheit von Gesetz und Evangelium  
G. Wingren, Evangelium und Gesetz  
E. Schlink, Gesetz und Paraklese  
in Antwort, Festschrift K. Barth, Zollikon-Zeh 1956  
G. Ebeling, Erwägungen zur Lehre vom Gesetz, ZThK 1958 (55) p.291 ff.

traditional reformed position<sup>1</sup>, but he even went a step farther. Nevertheless, in the light of our foregoing investigation, Barth's definition is not wholly satisfactory, because it does not bring out the upheaval induced by the coming of Christ and the constitution of the new Covenant.<sup>2</sup> The Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount and the apostolic directions appear on the same level<sup>3</sup>, and there is no distinction between the different uses of the term 'law' in Paul's epistles.<sup>4</sup>

Elert<sup>5</sup> points to the fact that with this interpretation of the Law three important factors are not taken into account, i.e.

- 1) that the promises of the Law apply only to those who keep it (Ex. 20,6),
- 2) that the Law is consistently a law of retaliation and therefore contains threats of punishment; and
- 3) that the Law is a form of God's judgment, added because of man's transgressions (*lex semper accusat*).

Nevertheless Barth's challenging study has compelled the Lutheran scholars to submit their traditional conception of Law and Gospel to a careful examination, and the discussions have certainly shed new light on our subject.

The term "Law" is such an ambiguous conception<sup>6</sup> that a clear definition is necessary as soon as we undertake to discuss this question.

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For a Roman-Catholic criticism of the Lutheran and Barthian positions see Peter Bläser, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, Catholica 14. Jg. 1960 p. 1-23.

- 1) W. Elert, op.cit. p.137: "Es ist klar, dass sich der Satz Barths, das Gesetz sei nur die Form des Evangeliums, mit diesem Verständnis des Gesetzes bei Calvin genau deckt."
- 2) cf. Schlink, op.cit. in "Antwort" p. 332 ff.
- 3) Barth, *Evangelium und Gesetz*, p. 12
- 4) ib. p. 13,14,16. The terms *Gesetz*, *Gebot*, *Anspruch*, *Anforderung*, are used synonymously.
- 5) W. Elert, op.cit. p. 137 ff.
- 6) see p. 85 f. and 346 ff.

Paul uses this word in at least four different senses, and the Stoic conception of 'natural law' introduces quite a new point of view, not to speak of Luther's definition of law.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, Althaus' study "Gebot und Gesetz"<sup>2</sup> is very illuminating. Althaus<sup>3</sup> draws our attention to the fact that in the New Testament epistles wherever God's command is spoken of in relation to the Christian life we do not find the term "law" (nomos), but rather the expression "will of God"<sup>4</sup> or "that which pleases God"<sup>5</sup>. If Paul uses the word "law" in this context it is either retrospectively<sup>6</sup> or in a figurative sense<sup>7</sup>. The only exception to this usage appears in the epistle of James<sup>8</sup>. John is absolutely consistent in his terminology. The word 'nomos' (law) is used for the Torah of Moses, whereas in relation to the new covenant he applies the term 'entolé' (commandment, charge).<sup>9</sup>

This New Testament differentiation in terminology<sup>10</sup> is of course not without significance. The varied conceptions reveal that God's will

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- 1) A definition like "While we are no longer under the Law, we are still with the Law" (A.R. Vidler, Christ's Strange Work, London 1944, p.21), taken up from Augustine, cannot help us any further.
  - 2) P. Althaus, Gebot und Gesetz, zum Thema 'Gesetz und Evangelium' Gütersloh 1952
  - 3) op.cit. p. 8 ff
  - 4) Rom. 12,2; Col. 1,9; 1 Thess. 4,3; 5,18; Eph. 5,17; 6,6; 1 Pet. 2,15; 4,2; 3,17; 4,19; Hebr. 10,36; 13,21.
  - 5) 'euàrestos': Rom. 12,1 f.; 14,18; Col. 3,20; Eph. 5,10; Phil. 4,18; Hebr. 12,28; 13,21.
  - 6) Rom. 13,8 ff.
  - 7) see above p. 86.
  - 8) Js. 2,8 f.
  - 9) e.g. John 10,18; 13,34; 14,15; 15,10.12; 1 Joh. 2,3 f.; 3,22.24; 5,2 f.; 2,7 f.; 3,23; 4,21; Revel. 12,17; 14,12.
  - 10) For Paul it is the 'nomos' as such which is abrogated and not only as far as it is designated as "Law of Moses", as is held by Bultmann, Theol. N.T. p. 269 f. Bultmann's section on the "Freedom from the Law" (ib. p. 341 ff) would be much clearer if he were taking into account the New Testament terminology as expounded above.



and demand do not confront man in the same manner in the Old and the New Covenants.<sup>1</sup> So Althaus' study in terminology corroborates our previous findings concerning Paul's theology.<sup>2</sup>

We shall not reproduce here Althaus' train of thought, which in the main lines agrees with our findings in § 8-9, but note summarily his conclusions concerning Barth's definition of Law and the traditional doctrine of the 'tertius usus legis'. He acknowledges that he is not far from Barth in his actual intention, but he deplors the "unfortunate formulation of the law as the form of the Gospel."<sup>3</sup> He suggests keeping the distinction between the terms law and commandment<sup>4</sup> which we find in the New Testament. The succession Law-Gospel is maintained, as Christ is said to be the end of the Law. The Gospel has replaced the Law<sup>5</sup>, but the commandment is part of the Gospel<sup>6</sup>. So Althaus does not follow Barth in his reversed formulation "Gospel and Law", but he introduces the formula "Gospel and commandment"<sup>7</sup> and modifies Barth's

- 1) "Das 'Gesetz', wie Paulus es in seinem Gegensatze zum Evangelium aufgezeigt hat, ist nicht in jeder Hinsicht dasselbe wie der ewige unveränderliche Wille Gottes an den Menschen, sondern muss von ihm als eine begrenzte, vorläufige, in Jesus Christus überholte und abgetane Gestalt desselben unterschieden werden." Althaus, op.cit. p.11; see also E. Brunner, Dogmatik II 1950 p. 261 f.  
H. Thielicke, Ethik I 1951 p. 239 ff.
- 2) see § 9.
- 3) "In dem, was sachlich gemeint ist, stehen wir nicht weit voneinander. Aber die Sache leidet bei Barth unter der unglücklichen Formulierung vom Gesetze als Form des Evangeliums, die als solche durch das Evangelium wiederhergestellt wird." Althaus, op.cit. p.25 n.1.
- 4) Gesetz und Gebot
- 5) "Seit und sofern wir unter dem Evangelium stehen, stehen wir nicht mehr unter dem Gesetze", op.cit. p. 26.
- 6) It is a pity that Ragnar Bring in his otherwise illuminating article 'Preaching the Law' (SJTh Vol. 13,1 1960 p. 1-32) fails to make this differentiation between O.T. Law and N.T. commandment. The issue cannot be clarified by calling Christ the new Law.
- 7) "Wir sagen nicht: 'Evangelium und Gesetz', aber: 'Evangelium und Gebot'. Der Christ ist frei vom Gesetze, aber nicht vom Gebote." Althaus, op.cit. p. 25. On this question see further  
W. Joest, Gesetz und Freiheit, p. 199;  
H. Gollwitzer, Zur Einheit von Gesetz und Evangelium, in Antwort 1956  
E. Schlink, Gesetz und Paraklese, in do.

definition as follows: "The Gospel meets us necessarily in the form of the commandment, but this commandment itself is Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

It is self-evident that from this point of view Althaus must repudiate the conception of 'tertius usus legis'. He does so for three reasons:

- 1) The conception of "Law" in theology is stamped by its opposition to the Gospel and is primarily understood as *lex accusans*, *condemnatrix*, *justificatrix*. So it is better to speak of biblical commandments and directions for the Christian life.
- 2) The term "Law" suggests that Christian life is ordered legalistically and Paul's distinction between letter and Spirit is not taken into account.
- 3) The term "Law" suggests that the directions for the Christian are only found in the imperatives of the Scripture. But in fact the lives of Jesus and the Apostles have also a normative significance. Even the whole history of the Church and its witness is a factor in our knowledge of God's will.

So Althaus replaces the formula of 'third use of the Law' by the sentence: "The Holy Spirit leads to the knowledge of the will of God also through moral direction and reality in the Scripture and in Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

#### 5. Was Paul prejudiced by the Judaistic misunderstanding of the Law?

After this survey of the most recent discussion concerning the issue of Law and Gospel we have to consider a question which is not without importance for our subject. It is sometimes suggested that Paul in his dealing with the Law was prejudiced by the Judaistic misunderstanding of the Law<sup>3</sup>, or that he fought only against this misunderstanding;<sup>4</sup>

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1) Althaus, op.cit. p. 26

2) "Der Heilige Geist leitet zur Erkenntnis des Willens Gottes auch durch die sittliche Weisung und Wirklichkeit in der Schrift und in der Christenheit." ib. p. 39.

3) cf. H.J. Schoeps, Paul, London 1961, p.213 ff and his conclusion ...

4) so usually Calvin see p.459

but as we are not in the same danger to-day, we may conceive the Law in a more positive and unbiased manner than Paul did. This tenet seems to be corroborated by Old Testament theology which emphasises that in early Israel the Law was not yet considered a means for attaining righteousness, but as "household-rule" for those who had been chosen as partners in God's covenant.<sup>1</sup> The Law did not impose itself as a burden or as something which brought man to despair, but it formed a subject of man's joy and delight, and there are many passages in the Old Testament which suggest that man is able to keep God's Law.<sup>2</sup> Should we not, then, in our evaluation of the Law free ourselves from Paul's one-sidedness and turn back to the view of early Israel? This is certainly a most important question, particularly in relation to the use of the Decalogue. For the following reasons, however, it is hardly possible to answer it positively:

In the first place we cannot turn back the wheels of history and adapt ourselves to a stage of revelation which has been superseded by later revelations resulting in a fuller knowledge of God's gift and demand. It is true that God's promise and Covenant preceded the Law, that man's obedience was not the condition of the Covenant, but his answer to God's election. It is possible to understand the Israelite's delight in the Law from this point of view, especially if we do not conceive the term "Law" in the narrow sense of "commandment", but according to its original meaning: Torah, which comprehends the witness of God's mighty deeds and his promises, including the gift of the offerings for atonement.<sup>3</sup> The Gospel is thus somehow prefigured in the Old Testament,

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p.218: "Because Paul had lost all understanding of the character of the Hebraic 'berith' as a partnership involving mutual obligations, he failed to grasp the inner meaning of the Mosaic law... Hence the Pauline theology of law and justification begins with the fateful misunderstanding in consequence of which he tears asunder covenant and law, and then represents Christ as the end of the law."

- 1) see § 5; cf. v. Rad, Theol. A.T. II p. 405
- 2) According to Deuteronomy it is easy to keep the Law if Israel only wants to. see v. Rad, op.cit. p. 407
- 3) see p. 36 n.1.

and the delight in the Law may have been caused by the conviction that God had elected Israel and given it the Law for life. But on the other hand this joy in the Law is promoted by the naive conviction that man is able to keep the law perfectly.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact this belief is shaken occasionally in the early history of Israel<sup>2</sup> and is shattered definitely by the prophets, but it emerged again in Judaism.

Nevertheless we may not speak exclusively of a misunderstanding of the Law in Judaism, because we must not project our knowledge of God's revelation into the Old Testament. God's Covenant in the Old Testament must not be identified with the Gospel of Christ;<sup>3</sup> God's promise of the New Covenant is not just the reality of this Covenant. The Law was given in order to be kept by the people<sup>4</sup>, and there are plenty of threats in the Old Testament concerning those who would not submit to the commandments. It is true that by the Prophets of the eighth century Israel's sin is pictured as consisting not so much in the transgression of certain commandments, as in their disregard of God's guidance and his gifts.<sup>5</sup> But the Prophets of the seventh and sixth centuries point out very clearly that Israel's disobedience consisted in the transgress-

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- 1) "Wenn dem Alten Testamente 'jener Gedanke, das Gesetz sei eine drückende Last, noch vollkommen fremd' ist (R.Kittel zu Ps. 19), so beurteilen wir das gewiss einerseits als eine Stufe vorkritischer Kindlichkeit, auf der man den unerbittlichen Tiefgang des Gesetzes noch nicht verstanden hat; auf der andern Seite haben wir aber auch das Urständliche darin zu erkennen, das auch bei dem Menschen, der Sünder geworden ist, nicht aufhört." Althaus, Gebot und Gesetz, p.13. cf. Brunner, Dogmatik II p. 259 ff.
  - 2) e.g. Jos. 24,19; cf. v. Rad, op.cit. II p. 280 and 413.
  - 3) The formulation of the prohibitions in the Decalogue may not be considered as promises (so Barth), but as absolute and strict commandments. see H.J. Kraus, Gottesdienst in Israel, p. 44 n.79.
  - 4) cf. Dt. 32,46-47: "This Law... is your life" and R.Aqiba's interpretation: "Wann ist es euer Leben? Wenn ihr euch darum müht." Str.-B. III 129. cf. Dt. 6,25!
  - 5) At that time the 'Law' was not yet a well-known quantity, see v. Rad, op.cit. p. 408.

ion of quite definite commandments.<sup>1</sup> The Torah which had been given for life, in the preaching of the prophets changed into a law which killed Israel<sup>2</sup>. At any rate the naive joy in God's law could not possibly be upheld in the face of the prophetic message.

Two possibilities seemed to present themselves as ways out of this dilemma:

- 1) a more scrupulous observance of God's Law, since the transgressions of it had resulted in punishment and rejection of the people. There are many texts which point in this direction, and Deuteronomy could at least be interpreted in this way.<sup>3</sup>
- 2) the acknowledgment that Israel was not able to keep God's Law because of the reason mentioned by Jeremiah<sup>4</sup>, which would result in the ardent expectation of the new covenant as promised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel<sup>5</sup>.

It was fatal that the Jews after the exile decided in favour of the first possibility and in so doing, barred as it were for themselves the passage to the new Covenant. It is of course possible that some groups were more inclined to the second possibility<sup>6</sup>, but we hardly have any proofs for that.<sup>7</sup>

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1) see v. Rad, op.cit. II p. 239 f.; 281; 412 f.

2) see v. Rad, op.cit. p. 414

3) see e.g. F. Baumgärtel, Verheissung, Gütersloh 1952, p. 66/67, who sees in the Deuteronomy the grand attempt to create the people of God on the basis of the Law.

4) Jer. 13,23

5) Jer. 31,31 ff; Ez. 37.

6) This is the opinion of H.J. Kraus, Gottesdienst in Israel, München 1954, see p. 109: "Neben dem Nomismus steht ein lebendiger Kreis von Menschen, die den eschatologischen Ansatz der nachexilischen Gemeinde wachgehalten haben. Es handelt sich um alle diejenigen, die "auf den Trost Israel warten", die darum auch das Gesetz anders lesen als die Schriftgelehrten und Pharisäer."

7) cf. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 34: "Die Stillen im Lande', die unter Ignorierung der Entwicklung des Judentums weiterhin in der Frömmigkeit der Psalmen lebten, dürften ein Produkt historischer Phantasie sein."



It is self-evident that for us a pre-Christian attitude towards the Law is not possible. The naive conviction that man is able to keep the Law and thus be justified by it, would be nothing else than Pelagianism. On the other hand, the recognition that we ought to keep the Law but are not able to do so would mean that we live under God's curse and have to face despair. As a matter of fact the new Covenant promised in the Old Testament is already established, and therefore we have to base our thinking and our actions on this fact.

So it is quite true that Paul speaks about the Law otherwise than is spoken in Israel, especially in the early sources, but also in Deuteronomy, and later in Judaism. But from this it does not follow that Paul was not aware of the earlier conception of Law or that he was only fighting the Judaistic misunderstanding. In the light of Christ's death who had become 'an accursed thing for our sake',<sup>1</sup> the Apostle recognized that the Law could do nothing but curse man because of his transgressions and kill him.<sup>2</sup> That this fact was not yet fully realized in the Old Testament may be conceived as a token of God's forbearance in the past<sup>3</sup>. But now, in Christ, the veil which had lain over the Old Covenant, is removed<sup>4</sup>, and not only the saving 'righteousness of

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1) Gal. 3,13

2) cf. Ebeling, ZThK 1958, p.290: "Das Alte Testament, für sich allein genommen, ist... in letzter Hinsicht nicht klar - und Paulus geht es nun einmal um eine Klarstellung in letzter Hinsicht. Darum trifft es m.E. durchaus nicht zu, dass das paulinische Gesetzesverständnis nur am spätjüdischen orientiert sei, jedoch das genuin alttestamentliche Verständnis gar nicht träfe, dass Paulus sich also nur mit einem bestimmten Verständnis bzw. Missverständnis des mosaischen Gesetzes auseinandersetze, nicht aber mit dem mosaischen Gesetz selbst."

On the complex character of the Old Testament from which can be drawn the lines to the Mishna as well as to the Sermon on the Mount, see Windisch, Der Sinn der Bergpredigt, p. 110.

3) Rom. 3,26

4) 2 Cor. 3,16



God'<sup>1</sup>, but also 'his wrath is revealed from heaven'<sup>2</sup>.

We have thus to be on our guard against blaming Paul for one-sidedness in his conception of the Law or against thinking that he deals only with a misunderstanding of his opponents. The correct interpretation of Rom. 7,7 ff can protect us from wrong conclusions. In this chapter the Apostle does not picture the experience of the Jew under the Law (such a view was not possible before the coming of Christ), nor does he depict the experience of the Christian (who is no longer under the Law), but he shows what would be the destiny of man under the Law after the revelation of God's righteousness and wrath.<sup>3</sup>

In view of these fact there is definitely no possibility of disregarding Paul's doctrine on the Law and of going back to the view of early Israel.

## 6. Summary.

From the foregoing sections it appears that in the theological discussion of the past decades the question of the shape of Christian life

1) Rom. 1,17

2) Rom. 1,18

On this text see the instructive study by G. Bornkamm, Die Offenbarung des Zornes Gottes (in: Das Ende des Gesetzes, München 1958, p. 9 ff); see esp. p. 32: "Dass das Gesetz tötet, lässt Gott der Welt erst durch die Boten des neuen Bundes sagen, weil es in der Ordnung ist, dass eine Decke auf der *παλαιά δικαιοσύνη* liegt, welche die für den Menschen tödliche *δύναμις* Gottes verhüllt, bis sie in Christus beseitigt wird (2. Kor. 3,7-16)... Jetzt aber, da die *δικαιοσύνη* Gottes *χωρίς νόμου* offenbart ist (Röm. 3,21), ist auch die Decke von dem Gesetz entfernt und der *νόμος* als Todesmacht über der sündigen Menschheit offenbart."

3) see L. Goppelt, Christentum und Judentum, p. 109: "Der volle verzweifelte Ernst der Situation unter dem Gesetz bricht... erst unter dem Evangelium auf; R. 7 ist hiernach Analyse der vom Evangelium her geradezu erst gesetzten 'vorchristlichen' Existenz."

has been given an extraordinary amount of attention. On the Reformed side it is stressed that man is faced primarily by the Gospel and that he meets God's demand with and in the Gospel. From this point of view the "second use of the Law" as existing apart from and before the Gospel is basically questioned. This conception is actually accepted by several Lutheran scholars, but they do not agree with the term "third use of the Law" as the Christian, according to the New Testament is no longer under the Law. So it turns out that an unbiased evaluation of New Testament theology and terminology, which is not from the outset determined either by Calvinistic or Lutheran tradition, leads to a considerable new outlook in our ethical approach.

With regard to this development - which should be hailed wholeheartedly - it is our conviction that the traditional conception of the Decalogue as summary and essence of God's Law for the Christian, still forms one of the main obstacles to a better understanding between the Lutheran and the Reformed positions. Both sides usually still stick to the presupposition that Paul (and to some extent also Jesus) has abrogated the Old Testament Law except the Decalogue.<sup>1</sup> That this assumption does not stand up to scrutiny has been proved in § 9-10.

On the basis of this presupposition then on the Lutheran side it is concluded that, as the Decalogue is not an adequate means to order the details of the Christian life (which is of course to the point)<sup>2</sup>, the

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- 1) see e.g. Elert, *Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade*, p. 159: "Er (Paulus) hat also tatsächlich ausser dem Dekalog die gesamte alttestamentliche Gesetzgebung für abrogiert angesehen. Das entspricht aber jedenfalls insofern auch der Stellung Jesu zum Gesetz, als auch dieser seine Gesetzesinterpretation auf den Dekalog beschränkt..."
  - 2) cf. E. Chr. Achelis, *Der Dekalog als katechetisches Lehrstück*, p. 72: "Denn zu einem Kompendium der Ethik, zu dem Luther... den Dekalog stempelt, fehlt sehr viel; von den christlichen Tugenden der Demut, der Geduld, der Selbstverleugnung, der Versöhnlichkeit und der Feindesliebe, des Fleisses, der Berufsfreudigkeit usw., von den Pflichten der Eltern gegen ihre Kinder, der Obrigkeit gegen ihre

Law is not given for the ruling of our life at all. Hence the Law has no third use, there remains only the "duplex usus" as taught by Luther. The Law is always accusing, it serves not to the building up of the new man, but to the destruction of the old<sup>1</sup>. But what happens actually, if we are thinking along this line? If we identify the revelation of God's demand with the Law (= the Decalogue) but deny that this Law has any function for the shaping of the Christian life, then we have to look for other 'standards' and there is only one step to the proclamation of natural law as guiding principle. This is of course in striking opposition to the New Testament.

On the Reformed side it is emphasised that God's will as revealed in the Law is relevant for the ordering of Christian life. But here, too, the "Law" is practically reduced to the Decalogue, and only by highly artificial methods are we able to extract from this Code something which - in the best sense - approaches the New Testament teaching. It is evident that on the Reformed side too we depart from the New Testament message, synchronizing the time of the Old Testament with that of the New, thus relativizing the difference between Law and Gospel.

Though it is not likely that by the revision of our traditional conception of the Decalogue the differences between the Lutheran and Reformed position concerning Law and Gospel will disappear at once, nevertheless we are convinced that the way for a more fruitful discussion would be opened up if on both sides we dared to take two necessary steps, i.e.

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Untertanen, von den Pflichten gegen die Familie, die Kirche, den Staat und vielen andern Dingen, die zu einem Kompendium der Ethik gehören, ist mit keinem Wort die Rede."

1) see Elert, op.cit. p. 159-160.

- 1) by giving up the fatal equation:

God's will = (Old Testament) Law = Decalogue,  
thus by revising our Reformed and Lutheran traditions<sup>1</sup> on this  
score, which are marked and determined by a pre-reformation mis-  
conception; and

- 2) by taking a more critical attitude towards the Lutheran and Reformed  
doctrines on Law and Gospel, or Gospel and Law, and thus not start-  
ing with the presupposition that either Luther or Calvin is in  
perfect consonance with Paul<sup>2</sup>, but by going back to the New Testa-  
ment theology and terminology.

- 1) cf. T.F. Torrance, *The School of Faith*, p. vii: "From time to time.. it is incumbent upon the Church to examine its traditional doctrine, put it to the test of the Word of God heard anew in fresh exegesis of the Holy Scriptures, and correct it where necessary as an instrument for further teaching and instruction."

It seems to us, however, that on the basis of the foregoing study our criticism of the traditional catechisms has to go a good deal farther than that put forward by Torrance (*op.cit.* p. xx f).

- 2) cf. K. Barth, *Die christliche Lehre nach dem Heidelberger Katechismus*, Zollikon-Zürich 1948 p. 15 f.

Friedrich Baumgärtel's article "Die zehn Gebote in der christlichen Verkündigung" (in *Festschrift Otto Procksch*, Leipzig 1934, p.29-44) is a striking example of identification of Luther's view with a constructed New Testament doctrine concerning the Decalogue.

Confessionalism is indeed one of the worst kinds of idol-worship in the Church, because by declaring a certain doctrine or tradition to be the truth we bar an unprejudiced listening to Him who declared, "I am the truth". The conception of infallibility seems not to be a peculiarity of the Roman-Catholic Church.

## § 22. Summary, conclusions and outlook.

### 1. Summary.

Before drawing our final conclusions we shall attempt to give a short summary of our findings concerning the use made of the Decalogue throughout the centuries.

In Israel the Ten Commandments, belonging to the apodictic Law, were connected with God's revelation at Mount Sinai and thus occupied an outstanding position as basic Charter of the Covenant. They were probably regularly recited at the feast of the renewal of the Covenant. But as all the other precepts of the Torah were also related to the time of Moses and were put in the mouth of Jahwe or his servant, the Decalogue was not essentially distinguished from the rest of the Torah. ( § 1 - 6 ).

When in Judaism to the Law was attributed a quality of perpetuity, the Ten Commandments shared in this evaluation, but were not singled out in any respect from the whole bulk of commandments. ( § 7 ).

Paul in his ethical instruction did not base his exhortations on the Old Testament Law, because he considered Christ the end of the Law and the exclusive source for the new life. A differentiation between moral, ceremonial and judicial commandments lay outside his scope, therefore the Decalogue was not made the basis of Christian ethics. ( § 8 - 9 ).

In this approach Paul is intrinsically in agreement with Jesus who had declared the Double Commandment of love the greatest commandment, so that by His interpretation it had even become a new command. God's will was done by man's belief in Jesus and by obedience to His call. ( § 10 ).

From the second century on, under the influence of Stoic philosophy, Gnostic speculation and a Judaistic-naturalistic misunderstanding of the Law, the Decalogue was separated from the rest of the Old Testament

commandments and equated with the *lex naturalis*, i.e. that law which had been written in man's heart since creation. In catechetical teaching, however, no use was made of this Code until the 13th century. An attempt of Augustine in that direction did not influence the general practice of the early Middle Ages. ( § 11 - 14 ).

The 13th century brought a double development with regard to the Ten Commandments. In scholastic theology the conception of natural law was interpreted according to Greek philosophy which resulted in the doctrine that man by his reason was able to recognize God's demand as embodied in the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments made their appearance in books of confession, and attained an outstanding position in the 15th century, forming a subject of the "catechism" besides the traditional Creed and the Lord's Prayer. ( § 15 ).

Luther, thinking that the Decalogue had formed a subject of teaching since the earliest Christianity, made this Code one of the main parts of his catechism. ( § 16 ).

Calvin, who followed Luther's catechism in the design of his Institutes, took the Ten Commandments over from Luther, but attributed to them another place in the Catechism of Geneva, stressing the third use of the Law. ( § 17 ).

The later catechisms followed the tradition of the Reformation ( § 18 ), so that even to-day in catechetical teaching the Decalogue is presented as containing the summary and essence of God's will for the shaping of the Christian life. This is at least the unquestioned presupposition in the Reformed tradition, whereas in the Lutheran Church there appears a certain ambiguity insofar as the "third use of the Law" is not unanimously acknowledged and the Decalogue therefore has mainly to fulfil the second use, i.e. to reveal sin. ( § 19 - 21 ).



## 2. Conclusions.

What conclusions are to be drawn from the exegetical and historical evidence mentioned above? This depends to a great extent on our standpoint in theology and tradition, whether in our thinking we choose to proceed from Paul, Luther, Calvin or anybody else, whether we work on philosophical presuppositions or base ourselves exclusively on God's revelation which attained its climax in the Word that became flesh.

In most cases we start with the assumption that the catechism of our own tradition is the unsurpassable standard-book for catechetical teaching.<sup>1</sup> As far as the history of catechetical instruction is taken into account, we can distinguish two attitudes:

- a) our own estimation of the Decalogue as supreme standard for catechetical-ethical teaching is projected back into the New Testament and Church history of the first twelve centuries, so that our present practice does not essentially disagree with that of the former times. We have discussed several instances of that sort<sup>2</sup>, but it goes without saying that such attempts have to be dismissed because they are in contradiction to the facts.
- b) The fact that the Decalogue was not used in practical theology until the 13th century is fully acknowledged, but then it is assumed that the Church in the former centuries missed something essential, as she failed to recognize the importance of this Code. This view is elaborated by Zezschwitz in his monumental work on the history of catechetical instruction<sup>3</sup> which we have referred to several times. Starting from Luther's "standard-book" (the catechism) he deplores that in the older Church the Decalogue had fallen into discredit.<sup>4</sup>

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1) see e.g. Zezschwitz, System... p. 44, who calls Luther's catechism the "Normalbuch".

2) e.g. Mayer, Göbl, Rentschka, Grant, Weismann.

3) Gerh. v. Zezschwitz, System der christlich kirchlichen Katechetik, Bd. 2: Der Katechismus oder der kirchliche Unterricht nach seinem Stoffe, 1872<sup>2</sup>

4) op.cit. p. 44

The appearance of the Decalogue in the 13th century and the final position given to it by Luther is considered a most important step in Church history.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that Zezschwitz does not take Paul, but Luther as his criterion; he acknowledges that the fate of the Decalogue in the Old Church was determined by her pagan-Christian structure and her Pauline character.<sup>2</sup> But he does not investigate thoroughly the reasons why Paul himself "discredited" the Decalogue, as he is convinced that in regard to the function of the Law, Luther's catechism has found the solution which was veiled to the Old Church (obviously including Paul!)<sup>3</sup>.

So Zezschwitz attributes to the emergence of the Decalogue in the later Middle Ages a 'heilsgeschichtliche' significance. The century before the Reformation gave the Decalogue back (sic) to the Church as a 'mirror' for sins. The Reformation however was to restore Christ as grace and truth.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1) cf. op.cit. p. 163: "Es bedurfte eines völligen Umschwunges in der Beachtung und Werthachtung des letzteren (= the Decalogue), um ihm allmählich das Präjudiz des Normalausdruckes für das Lehrstück vom Gesetze am Ausgange des MA's zu erobern, auf Grund dessen er endlich, insbesondere durch Luthers katechetische Arbeiten, in Form einer reformatorischen That, seine wahre Stelle wiederfand, wie in der Heilsordnung, so zugleich im Katechismus." see also above p. 332.
  - 2) Zezschwitz, op.cit. p. 168
  - 3) "Die ganz dem Neutestamentlichen Principe abgelauschte Lösung, die das Normalbuch Luthers für dieses Problem gefunden, war ihr (= der alten Kirche) verhüllt." op.cit. p. 178-179.
  - 4) "Wie Johannes der Täufer zu dem Auftreten Christi, so verhält sich zu der erneuerten Predigt der Rechtfertigung allein aus Glauben die über alle Gebiete des Lebens und der Theologie gehende Herrschaft des Dekaloges im 15. Jahrhundert. Der Katechismus und die ersten katechetischen Arbeiten Luthers sind das Siegel auf die gesamte Entwicklung. Der Glaube tritt in die centrale Stelle, vor den Glauben aber tritt das Gesetz. Gehoben war endlich, was als wesentlichstes Hindernis der alten Kirche im Wege gestanden, die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre richtig zu erkennen und zu verwerthen: der Mangel des richtigen Verständnisses vom Verhältnisse des Gesetzes zum Evangelium." op.cit. p. 271

It is self-evident that from this standpoint Zezschwitz must consider the reversal of Law and Creed in the Reformed catechisms as a relapse from the 'clear reformed fundamental idea'.<sup>1</sup>

The arrangement of our thesis shows that we chose as starting point of our approach the New Testament, especially the teaching of Paul, because it is our conviction that the New Testament should not be read primarily through the spectacles of Lutheran or Reformed theology, but that Church history and our present practice in catechetical teaching must be judged in the light of the New Testament.

From this point of view, then, the question of our subtitle must be answered negatively: The Decalogue is not an adequate basis for the ethical teaching of the Church. Though we try to give the Decalogue a kind of New Testament interpretation - which has proved to be a rather unsatisfactory attempt<sup>2</sup> - we cannot on the basis of this Code bring out the specific New Testament approach to ethics, neither are we able to reach to the new content of ethics which appeared with Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

1) op.cit. p. 303; cf. p. 312

2) see § 19.2

3) We fully agree with Barth's definition, "Die Ethik... ist in der Erkenntnis Jesu Christi begründet, weil dieser der heilige Gott und der geheiligte Mensch in einem ist." (KD II/2 p. 564), and with his ethical approach in general. But as he, like Calvin, does not distinguish clearly the different stages of revelation and history, he calls the Decalogue "das Grundstatut des Gnadenbundes, das für alle Zeiten gültig ist," (ib. p. 765) and approves of the Decalogue being reckoned among the principal parts of the Catechism (ib.).

In a more recent interview however Barth asserted that he would not develop Christian ethics on the basis of the Decalogue, but rather proceed from the Lord's Prayer (as did Theodore of Mopsuestia). We would not go as far as Althaus, blaming Barth for a "Epochenlosigkeit in seinem Verständnis von Gottes Handeln" (Durch das Gesetz kommt Erkenntnis der Sünde, p.12), but we seem to discover a certain inconsistency in Barth's ethical approach caused by his Calvinistic conception of the history of revelation. (For a radical criticism of the "Aufhebung der Geschichtlichkeit" in the "Barthian school" see Thielicke, Ethik I p. 193 ff.)

We cannot therefore consider the entry of the Decalogue into theology and into catechetical practice, and the position given to it in the Reformation, as a necessary and wholesome development, but look on it rather as a departure from the New Testament and a distortion of the Gospel. This appears all the more if we take into account the Judaistic and pagan influences which paved the way for the entry of this Code into Christian theology.<sup>1</sup> The dilemma in the discussion concerning Law and Gospel between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions is caused to a great extent by a different synthesis on each side between the New Testament evidence and medieval theology.<sup>2</sup> By going back to the New Testament (and not just to Luther, Calvin, Augustine or Irenaeus) we would gain quite a new basis ensuring a more fruitful discussion.

Finally it is necessary to deal shortly with some objections which are usually put forward against the view that the Decalogue should not be taken as the basis of our ethical teaching:

- 1) We would lose our standard for Christian life and fall into mere subjectivism.

This argument does not go to the root of the question, because in practice we do not take our standards from the Old Testament, but try to read the New Testament conceptions into the Ten Commandments. The Christological foundation is strong enough for our ethics, we need not look for a higher authority in the Old Testament (which does not actually exist).

- 2) The Double Commandment of Love is too vague as a basis for Christian ethics.

We are of course not encouraged by the New Testament to take 'love' as a sort of principle which might be interpreted according to our

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1) see § 22.3 b

2) see § 21.2

own wishes, even if desirable in the sense of 'eros'. Christ has taught us by His life and His words what is meant by 'love'.<sup>1</sup>

- 3) There would be no system in our catechetical teaching if we were not following the commandments of the Decalogue.

It is correct that the Decalogue deals systematically with fundamental aspects of human life, especially as they presented themselves at an early stage of Israel's history. But to give up using this Code does not necessarily mean having no system in one's teaching. The structure of the compendiums of ethics remove this objection.

- 4) The Decalogue is an adequate means for developing ethics on different levels, according to the age of the children who have to be taught.

This is a methodological point which has some truth in it, but it does not take into account the problems of interpretation mentioned before.<sup>2</sup> There is no reason why it should be impossible to adapt New Testament ethics to the understanding of the catechumens.

- 5) "There can be no sudden leap from the ethics of the primitive man to the ethics of the New Testament... Primitive peoples like all others have to be led through the stages in the discovery of God through which his people were led under Moses and the prophets."<sup>3</sup>

This was certainly not Paul's opinion.

In conclusion we would suggest the following change in definition concerning the revelation of God's demand:

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- 1) cf. D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethik*, p. 156: "Auf die Frage, was Liebe sei, antwortet das Neue Testament ganz eindeutig, indem es ausschliesslich auf Jesus Christus weist. Er ist die einzige Definition der Liebe."
- 2) see § 19.2
- 3) G.E. Phillips, *The Old Testament in the World Church*, London/Redhill 1942 + 1948.

Traditional definition: God's will for the shaping of Christian life is revealed in his law as summed up in the Decalogue (possibly equated with natural law).

New Testament approach: God's will for the shaping of Christian life is fully and finally revealed in Christ. He is made our righteousness and redemption, but also our wisdom and sanctification.<sup>1</sup> By our coming to Him and following Him (Synoptics), by our remaining in His love and keeping the new commandment (John), by our union with Christ in Baptism and Eucharist and as members of His Body, by imitating Him, forgiving and loving our fellow-men as He has loved and forgiven us, in one word, by being guided by the Spirit (Paul), God's will is perfectly fulfilled in us.

### 3. Outlook.

It is self-evident that this New Testament approach in ethics will lead to a revision of our catechetical practice. Without going into details we would suggest the following plan for our teaching:

1. Proclamation of the Gospel and presentation of the Christian faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed.
2. Exposition of the Sacraments which are basic for our understanding of the new reality created by Christ's death and resurrection. In them our union with Christ is manifest: the believer is dead to sin and Law and transferred to the new life of freedom and love. This leads to the third part:
3. The new life in Christ: God's will for the shaping of our life is revealed by the Double Commandment of Love, as interpreted by Christ's life and words. Catechumens must be introduced to the practice of discerning the will of God, based on God's revelation

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1) 1 Cor. 1,30



in Christ, taking into account the exhortations in the New Testament. This practice will be related to those concrete problems facing the Christian in the form of challenges from the surrounding world. Here also is the place to deal with prayer, which will sum up the foregoing instruction.

This arrangement does not differ very much from that of the Heidelberg Catechism. But we would suggest starting with the proclamation of the Gospel instead of with a section on 'The Misery of Man', as man's wretchedness will be revealed in his encounter with Christ. In most parts of the world the Church finds herself in a missionary situation similar to that of the first centuries, and we are therefore justified in following the Apostolic pattern in our kerygma and didaché.

The question whether the Apostles' Creed is really the best basis for the 'dogmatic' part of our catechism cannot be discussed here. But it ought not to be forgotten that the Creed is to be considered rather as an aid than an absolute pattern which has to be followed slavishly. At any rate it will be better to approach Augustine's method of 'narratio' than that of the Westminster Catechism, which replaces the Creed by a dogmatic discussion of the items of Christian Doctrine. God's dealings with Israel have certainly to be expounded in this part, and in this connexion the Decalogue will be given due consideration.

From the foregoing investigation<sup>1</sup> it has become clear that the sacraments are to be dealt with before the part on "Christian Life". We need not go here further into this matter.

For the third part, "The new life in Christ", no fixed pattern can be provided. The New Testament texts concerning the commandment of love and the imitation of Christ (based on God's love and our unity with Christ) are basic. The Sermon on the Mount and the exhortations of the

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1) see esp. § 9.4 and 19.3.

Epistles will provide rich material as to how this love and imitation are to be expressed in Christian life. What has to be stressed in Christian ethics is not the learning by heart of any moral Code, but the practice of discerning God's will in the actual circumstances of the life of the Church and the individual Christian.<sup>1</sup>

If we dare to free ourselves from the traditional catechetical-ethical teaching on the basis of the Decalogue it will show that this freedom will not result in "Antinomianism", but in a more genuine obedience to God's will as revealed finally and incomparably in His Son, in whom "all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell."<sup>2</sup>

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- 1) Inspiring examples of such discernment are given in the Bulletin 'Laity' of the WCC 1960/10 "Discernment and Decision".

cf. D. Bonhoeffer, Ethik, p. 145-149, "Das Prüfen", and  
K. Barth, KD II/2 p. 707 ff.

- 2) Col. 1,19.

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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